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### LITERARY CRITICISM

#### TERRY EAGLETON

*Literary Theory: An Introduction* 244pp. Blackwell. £15 (paperback, £4.95). 0 631 13258 9

Terry Eagleton's justification for theory is that we all practise it. "Keynes once remarked that those economists who dislike theory, or claimed to get along better without it, were simply in the grip of an older theory. This is also true of literary students and critics." But not of readers. Reading a book on economics does not make me an economist, any more than using grammar turns me into a grammarian. At once a gap opens, which Eagleton ignores, between the reader of literature and the "student" of it. Might we not partake best of the reading experience, as of any other, the more we take for granted our relation to the experience itself? To be enthralled by literature, to laugh and cry over it, to wish to know more about what is happening in it, is an equivalent of our instinctual use of language, or of the bicyclist or violinist who has come to be able to do it without knowing how.

The argument that all users of literature are in Eagleton's sense theorists of it is therefore a species of one, however much of a truism it may be that we cannot avoid bringing to an experience of literature all our conditioned modes of understanding, our attitudes and prejudices. But now that literature has been taken over as a subject for theoretical study it moves, as philosophy and the sciences have tended to do, from ontology to epistemology. And beyond. Why do we set about knowing what literature is? Our inquiry should be

neither ontological nor methodological but strategic. This means asking first not what the object is or how we should approach it, but why we should want to engage with it in the first place. The liberal humanist response to this question, I have suggested, is at once perfectly reasonable and, as it stands, entirely useless. Let us try to concretize it a little by asking how "discourse theory" or "cultural studies" might contribute to making us all better people.

Those last words have a familiar ring, though one not usually associated with this type of question. For most readers literature is out there, like the

Pyramids. It is not a strategy, or "a matter of starting from what we want to do". New theory, however, proposes to identify literature with the theoretical study of it, and the purpose of that study. We do not look into literature to find out how to be better: we find out how to be better by remaking literature as a subject. "The present crisis in the field of literary studies is at root a crisis in the definition of the subject itself."

It is fashionable nowadays to speak of a crisis in English studies, as was shown by the recent symposium in *The Times Literary Supplement*. The word and the idea have been transposed from the scenario vocabulary of Journalism, where crisis is always the order of the day. A real crisis might exist if it could be shown that teachers had lost the will to share their knowledge and their experience of reading, and students had lost all interest in what they read. But for this there is no evidence. The silent majority continues to read as before, and with the same kind of pleasures and ennui that have always attended reading for a degree in English. A minority of activists are concerned to create a crisis by presenting a picture of one, and thus stimulating a need for revolutionary change.

The political analogy is obvious, and everywhere insisted on by Eagleton himself. The object of revolution would be the study of the science of literature, or "literariness", since literature, like human nature, is a bourgeois concept, dismissed by Eagleton as by Mao Tse-tung as part of the usual old nonsense about "eternal verities". "Truth to life", that well-known conservative postulate - life for its purpose assuming the appearance of a certain stability and continuity - must also be disposed of. Eagleton quotes Barthes: "Literature is what gets taught" - it has no existence outside the teaching of it. The ghost of an old Marxist piety makes an incongruous appearance here. The separation of literature from the theory and teaching of it is like the "alienation" of the individual in bourgeois society. From now on the two will merge to create a harmonious whole. The crisis involved by their separation will be over.

That at least is the scenario, and it is noticeable that all modern literary theory, not just the Marxist, endorses some kind of unity principle as between literature and the study of it. But suppose that what we like about literature is its distance from us, the

#### John Bayley

fact that it is another world which, as Bacon observed, "gives some show of satisfaction to the mind at those points where the nature of things doth deny it". In that case modern literary theory must write us off as incorrigible.

All revolution must excite, and it is more exciting to feel that we are not just submitting to literature, as to life, but absorbing it and controlling it. All participants enjoy the sense of power, whether in storming the Winter Palace or in reconstructing how we should read books. Eagleton is careful to work up a sense of excitement, and on that basis he has made a lively and useful guidebook to the new methods. It is also full of scholarly distinctions and perceptions. He rightly insists, for example, that the true precursors of today's theory were the Russian and East European formalists of the revolutionary era. The beetle-browed hatchmen of RAPP and the cultural KGB proclaimed socialist realism as a convenient doctrine for the masses, but the intellectual message of literary Marxism was contained in the formalist doctrines. In what Eagleton calls "a practical scientific spirit" they inquired into the engineering of the literary work, the "material reality" of the text. Since then, and the forerunners of semiotics like Saussure, literary theory has seemed to rest soundly on a scientific basis, self-evidently superior to any previous kinds of "subjectivist approach".

In practice, of course, and as Eagleton again rightly implies, such literary theorists are as much theologians as the cruder sort of Marxist, for where literature is concerned theory and theology cannot be separated. Mystics like Leavis, whose words sleep not in their hands, have no time for theory, but they are ideologists too. We all are, insists Eagleton. In his survey of the development of an Honours School of English, he draws attention to its origins in the routine cultural Angst of the nineteenth century: "English" has always been in the forefront of a national idea of some sort, an official or unofficial concern with our cultural heritage, from Matthew Arnold onwards. Identified, too, with a class outlook: upper-middle to start with, then middle-middle, today some more or less auto-constructed form of emancipated proletarian. Each has tended to read English literature on its own class basis; Leavis's Lawrence, for instance, is an essentially middle-class phenomenon, and Leavis's key-word

"life" suggests the aspirations and values of a society not all that different from C. S. Lewis's fairy-tale religious one.

Indeed the ambience of "English" has always been a kind of substitute for the religious one; "a pacifying influence" says Eagleton; a new opiate for the student masses. It could, however, pose as a church militant. George Gordon, an early Oxford professor, claimed in his inaugural lecture that "England is sick". Auden, with his Oxford third and his pleasure in Anglo-Saxon, must have responded to that, and he showed how marvellous poetry could be made out of turning the whole thing into a charade, for which Leavis never forgave him. Partly for class reasons Eng Lit in England has tended to remain ideologically biased, while France and America go for pure theory. Part of Eagleton's purpose is to claim that ideology and theory must and should enhance each other and become one, so that the scenario in which hermeneutics, deconstruction and reception theory are going forward is also that which makes "action urgent and its purpose clear".

Of course he exaggerates, like all evangelists, the extent to which we and our literature really live by disputation and the voice of the spirit. He cannot drink beer without a stratagem, and much of his book is taken up with proving that all readers are propagandists for their particular set of beliefs and that all writers in the past were so too. Again there is a truism here which distorts by insistence, the same sort of truism as those about language which make up the semiotic approach. In practice, though, the Eagletonian rigour seems partly assumed. He has always smuggled practical perceptions in his theoretical baggage and slipped out from inside his ideologist's image. He is not wholly serious in peddling Shakespeare the class enemy, or Richardson the militant feminist, which is why what he writes about them can be illuminating. But dedicated students cannot be expected to share these divisive skills. True, we all interpret the works of the past in our own way. But to encourage its deliberate take-over for ideological purposes is also to encourage in the young a shortsightedness insensate beyond philistinism.

It also encourages the wholly communal approach. Though the silent majority prefer to do it on their

own, students can often be oppressed by the fact that books have to be read that way. Hence the activist's wish to raise morale by full-scale communalization, to put the student inside the subject, rather than leaving him outside literature. By being all together on the inside, no longer alienated by reading books unrelated to ourselves, as if the past were a foreign country where they do things differently, we shall also come to adopt the right political attitudes. Literature must go if it cannot be used, for its independent existence is a threat to the righteous state and the caring society. That at least is the parable with which Eagleton concludes his book.

We know that the lion is stronger than the lion-tamer, and so does the lion-tamer. The problem is that the lion does not know it. It is not out of the question that the death of literature may help the lion to awaken.

What is the lion? The people of England, who have been prevented by their own literature - imposed on them by the upper classes - from expressing and becoming conscious of themselves. And now that increasing numbers of them are reading Eng Lit they can be delivered from the burden of the literature itself.

In a remarkably short space of time the ideological wheel has come full-circle. Instead of saving England English literature must now be abolished if England is to be saved. Theory, like a laser beam, will burn out all that dead tissue. We shall have a new scenario, a harmonious workshop of theory and practice, as if we were taking part in a film by Godard. We shall indeed have literariness without literature, the feel of the thing without its actuality.

In practice I suspect this will only take place among the elect, the new elite which communes deposed on even more than traditional establishments. The rest of us need not worry too much. For the cultural scenario evolving today and in the discernible future seems in fact very different from the Eagletonian model, one much more like Malraux's "Musee Imaginaire". There is more culture around today for more people than ever before - an excellent theory in itself - and it is conveniently presented and packaged so that people can look and read as and where they choose. For Eagleton these conveniences are a way of keeping us quiet, got up by

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capitalism and the media. But accessibility does not destroy the reality of art, and it may be this very presentness and diversity of literature and culture which upset the puritan activists of theory. Plausibly enough, open-plan art and culture-viewing seem to them to send the populace to sleep instead of waking it up. Theory braces, culture relaxes. So gruff exclusiveness becomes a duty and an image, as is shown by the present-day *New Statesman*, once the most hospitably relaxed and cultivated of the weeklies.

It must be admitted, though, that there is nothing philistine about Eagleton's erudition and presentation. On the contrary, as he guides us round the chic stalls of contemporary critical fashion they begin to look like a more intellectual version of the displays got up by the advertising and publishing media. The museum of theory is always open, exhibiting the counterparts of all the other cultural artifacts available

today. Feminism, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, structuralism and post-structuralism – we can take our choice, but what they have in common is a similarity of mechanism, offering the student a fashionable substitute for identifying with the human identity of a book, for "the object of the science of literature is not literature but literariness". Among other things Roman Jakobson's famous statement shows why modern criticism has got the modern literature it deserves.

Literariness is a substitute for experience, the bugbear of modern theory. But unless we read books in search of experience we never get outside the workshop of theory. Literature, like religion, has also depended on Coleridge's "suspension of disbelief", another dead doornail today, for belief in an author's story or in his characters has now no place in theory. This means we also forgo the author; modern criticism has no wish to "get to know" him, in the sense that T. S. Eliot said that the pleasure of reading Kipling was "getting to know a mind very different from my own". The personality of an author is not the same as his literariness.

On the other hand much modern theory often sounds like an attempt to express by quasi-scientific formula what the reader is doing as part of a human transaction. Deconstruction, we are now told, shows how the language of literature escapes the sense which tries to contain it, and also "rejects the literary/non-literary opposition as an absolute distinction". What reader who has not been brainwashed by formalism and structuralism ever supposed otherwise? But theory now requires to sound theoretical in order to undo theory, and jargon can only be discredited by counter-jargon, as was amusingly shown by Edward Said's massive and learned study *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Today's

talk about discourse and strategy, praxis and reification, curiously resembles that ancient craze in art criticism, which once seemed so exciting, for "significant form". In *Art and Anarchy* Edgar Wind finally put paid to it in the plainest language by pointing out that we cannot see a picture if we ignore or misunderstand the significance of its human subject, the lasting human reality which a Renaissance painter, say, was able to conjure out of passing forms and conventions.

In matters of literary and cultural taste toleration is so important that it is tempting to see today's literary theory as a number of useful if temporary devices for making us sit up and take notice. Where critical aids are concerned we should be treating of assets only. But the fashion for dehumanization has gone too far, and, as Eagleton's book unintentionally shows, now verges on the farcical. What is strange is that it should all be done in the name of "ordinary" people, with their ordinary non-élite interests. Eagleton seems conscious of this. One can stand almost any jargon but that of bogus humanism, and he constantly employs it, in phrases like "what it means to be a person". Yet no author here is treated as a person, in the fullest sense of art, with whom we learn to commune, whose world we can share. So far have things gone that a simple exclamation of "pleasure" from a perceptive critic about an author he knows and loves – for example in John Jones's newly published book on Dostoevsky – seems today like the past retrieved, the writer rediscovered. Most of the theories Eagleton expounds may seem soon outlandish curiosities, cooked up by teachers of literature who need to feel professional, in the sense that philosophers or scientists do, or powerful, like politicians.



Richard Sutt, an actor admired by Charles Lamb, as *Dicky Gossip* in *Howe's My Grandmother at the Haymarket Theatre in 1793*; a painting by Samuel de Wilde in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and reproduced in Lord David Cecil's *A Portrait of Charles Lamb* reviewed below.

## The old familiar faces

Grevel Lindop

DAVID CECIL

A Portrait of Charles Lamb

192pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Constable, £9.95, 0 09 46450 0

Full-length portraits of Charles Lamb tend to look ill-proportioned. Henry Meyer's painting (1826) shows a shiny, rosy-cheeked head surmounting a limp rag-doll body: shoulders collected, arms floppy, legs askew. F. S. Cary, painting Charles and Mary a few months before Charles's death in 1834, presents a pair of sinister dwarfs, Charles dwindling from massive, heavy-featured head to tiny, mouse-like feet. Those who restricted themselves to head and shoulders fared better: Hazlitt's Lamb – "in the dress of a Venetian Senator" – looks suitably forceful and intelligent and G. F. Joseph's 1819 watercolour, showing a leaner, more cautious and careworn Lamb, seems thoroughly convincing.

That these comparisons can be made so easily is an indication of the value of David Cecil's *A Portrait of Charles Lamb*. The volume gathers together most extant pictures of Lamb, and combines them with a rich array of sketches, topographical prints, caricatures and portraits of Lamb's friends and associates, from the "divine plain face" of the actress Fanny Kelly (represented by a delightfully naïf coloured inset picture) to the "Witch of Endor" (that detestable picture from Stackhouse's *New History of the Holy Bible* with which the young Charles delighted to terrify himself. Lamb's London is especially well-represented: there are fine prints of the Temple Gardens, the interior of the South Sea House, Christ's Hospital and other Elysian haunts, reproduced in excellent colour.

Unfortunately the text often does less than justice to the illustrations, and like some of Lamb's fellow-artists, seems to have trouble getting him into perspective. Despite sensible critical discussion emphasizing the distance between Ella and Lamb, we are frequently offered Ella's "vision" as a straightforward reflection of Lamb's own. There are dangers in this (take, for example, Ella's recreation of

extensive prospects – ... what were they to me, being out of the boundaries of my Eden? – So far from a wish to roam, I would have drawn, methought, still closer the fence of my chosen prison; and have been hemmed in by a yet securer cincture of those excluding garden walls". How far we can read this glittering play of Miltonic and Marvellian conceits as an autobiographical statement is problematic; but the problem is never raised.

Nor is the complexity of Lamb's psychology given its due. Cecil tries to present a plain, common sense view: Lamb had a "darker side" and a "brighter side", as well as a "fanciful poetic strain". Usually gentle and

charming, he could be "uncharacteristically" snappish. None of this is untrue; but one would like to see some move towards a subtler view of Lamb, some attempt to grasp the many-sided personality whole. We might do worse than think again about P. G. Patmore's perception of Lamb as "a gentle, amiable, and tender-hearted misanthrope" who "hated and despised men with his mind ... in proportion as (and precisely because) he loved and yearned towards them in his heart". That surely brings us closer to the author of "Poor Relations" and "A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People", to the man who could examine with curiosity his own calmness at seeing his mother

## Just Walking Around

What name do I have for you?

Certainly there is no name for you

In the sense that the stars have names

That somehow fit them. Just walking around,

An object of curiosity to some,

But you are too preoccupied

By the secret amudges in the back of your soul

To say much, and wander around,

Smiling to yourself and others,

It gets to be kind of lonely

But at the same time off-putting,

Counter-productive, as you realize once again

That the longest way is the most efficient way,

The one that looped among islands, and

You always seemed to be travelling in a circle.

And now that the end is near

The segments of the trip swing open like an orange.

There is light in there, and mystery and food.

Come see it. Come not for me, but for it.

But if I am still there, grant that we may see each other.

John Ashbery

# Patterns of pragmatism

Harold Perkin

SYDNEY CHECKLAND

British public policy 1776-1939: An economic, social and political perspective

431pp. Cambridge University Press. £30, 0 521 24596 6

Sydney Checkland is a creative opportunist. Long associated with the Social Science Research Council – from which Sir Keith Joseph has wanted to remove the "Science", despite the Conservatives' enormous debt to one particular kind of social scientist, namely the free-market economists – he knows which way the wind is blowing. "Relevance" used to be the buzz-word, until its boring buzz made people reach for their intellectual fly-swats. Now it is "policy", as in "Centre for Policy Studies". Any study, even history – that heavy but inescapable load of intellectual baggage which we are forced, in nostalgic, post-imperial Britain more than in most other countries, to carry through life like Bunyan's guilt-ridden pilgrim – can be made worthy of moral and material support if it can be shown to have lessons for public policy.

It was an inspired thought, therefore, for Professor Checkland to offer what amounts to a general social, economic and political history of modern Britain from Adam Smith to the eve of the Second World War around the theme of a history of government policy. It is certainly an ambitious book, with three principal objectives: a particular point of entry, via government decision-making, into the general history of Britain; an introduction, especially for students in

higher education, to the study of public policy; and the provision of perspectives for those currently involved or interested in policy-making. It is also broad in its frontal attack, setting out to tackle the eight challenges which over this long span of more than a century and a half came increasingly to confront governments: first, the task of maintaining economic stability at reasonable levels of employment while, second, inducing structural adjustments to industrial and technological change; third and fourth, the reluctant but unavoidable regulation of the organization and power of business and labour; fifth and sixth, the need and attempts to promote social justice and political stability, including, belatedly, the redistribution of income and wealth and the provision of welfare for society's casualties; seventh, the control of social behaviour and public morals, from the changing framework of family law to the balance between "obscenity" and "permissiveness" in the media and entertainments; and eighth, the sanctions imposed by the penal system on deviants from the current social and economic codes. Finally, the most difficult ambition was the effort at integration, to elicit some sort of pattern of development and interaction between the policy responses of very different governments at very different times in a country little noted for systematic self-examination and dedicated to uncritical "ad hocery" and "muddling through".

Given these multiple and cross-cutting ambitions, the book is a tour de force. A remarkably skilful juggler, Checkland succeeds in keeping all eight balls in the air while joggling along the road of policy and legislation at an

impressively brisk pace. A price has of course to be paid for such lightning footwork and legerdemain. There are no footnotes or references except for constant cross-references to other balls in the air at other points on the road, and some of the balls whizz by so fast that they leave little permanent impression on the retina, notably those dealing with the family and the position of women and children, with control of morals and behaviour, and with penal policy. There are also rather too many minor factual slips (the Charity Organization Society was founded in 1869, not 1863, there was no general election in 1911, but there was a National Insurance Act in that year, not in 1912) which more careful proof-reading would have eliminated. But the overall performance is at a very high level, and Checkland, as might be expected from his record of first-rate contributions to the history of economic thought, economic policy and finance, is particularly strong in presenting the ideas of influential theorists from Adam Smith to John Maynard Keynes, in dealing with government monetary and fiscal policy, and with the state's reluctant but increasing involvement in the conflicts between capital and labour.

Part of the skill stems from a cool open-mindedness which is out of fashion with academics and politicians in these days of tiresome "commitment" (for which read "prejudice" in old-fashioned English) on both extremes, right as well as left. He applies what he calls "the policy menu" approach and constantly asks, for each period and area of concern, what options were, in theory and more importantly in practical politics, open to the government, of whatever

political party. For example, of the social and economic problems of the inter-war period he asks what policy possibilities were conceptually available to government, and runs rapidly through the Soviet collectivized model (which attracted only a few, but dedicated, admirers), the continuation of war-time controls (wanted neither by capital nor by labour, who both preferred free collective bargaining), nationalization (passionately supported by the coal-miners, less passionately by the railwaymen, only lukewarmly by the TUC and the Labour Party, and only then in relation to the older, more obsolescent industries), government support for, but not management of, growth industries (pursued on a small and half-hearted scale), tariff protection (played with in the 1920s and forced on Britain by the world crisis of the 1930s), protection accompanied by a radical redistribution of incomes (a small degree of which was forced on governments by the exigencies of welfare programmes and the belief in the sanctity of a balanced budget).

Professor Checkland makes little attempt to explain, except for the occasional reference to the widening of the franchise. That the growing complexity and interdependence of individuals in society, due to the rising scale of technology and the proliferation of perceived needs for ever more sophisticated goods and specialized services, can be mediated only by some comprehensive and compelling organ as the state, is a topic not specifically addressed. Nevertheless, this is a book to be read and pondered by politicians and their dupes as well as by the university and college students for whom it is intended. It is a pity that the students, as with so many books from the Cambridge University Press, will not be able to afford it.

Central Electricity Generating Board under that label.

What of the general pattern of developing public policy over the whole period? Despite the pragmatic, *ad hoc*, reactive response of successive British governments to particular social and economic problems, often delayed until what Checkland calls the "social action equation" came into operation (ie, statutory action only occurs when things get so bad that the demand for reform exceeds the forces of resistance), there has been, at least since "pressure from below" in the form of increasing democracy came into play, a persistent trend towards state central control of and intervention in the affairs of the individual and society. We can all vouch for that, including those who resent it and are trying to put the clock back to Ricardo and those who think it not enough and wish to put it back one hour less to Marx. But why the trend towards *etatisme* has occurred – often just as fast under Conservative governments as under their opponents – Professor Checkland makes little attempt to explain, except for the occasional reference to the widening of the franchise. That the growing complexity and interdependence of individuals in society, due to the rising scale of technology and the proliferation of perceived needs for ever more sophisticated goods and specialized services, can be mediated only by some comprehensive and compelling organ as the state, is a topic not specifically addressed.

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## Corporate confines

Francis Sheppard

I. G. DOOLITTLE

The City of London and its Livery Companies

201pp. Gavin Press, 36 Fore Street, Evershot, Dorchester, Dorset. £12.50, 0 905868 11 0

Every year the incoming Lord Mayor of London puts on a great show for the entertainment of the populace and rides in his splendid coach through the streets of the City to the Law Courts to be sworn in. And later on there is a tremendous banquet in Guildhall, with trumpeters and pikemen providing a worthy setting for the bejewelled and beamed guests, who always include many of the greatest people in the land. Nowadays part of this great occasion is televised live, and so the population of the nation can enjoy it too.

It is sad, however, that these City occasions are in reality largely sham, or at any rate that they do not still possess the substance which they once had and which they have only lost through the myopic attitude of the Corporation. For the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Common Councillors have by a series of deliberate decisions made over many years restricted themselves to the affairs of a "tiny enclave of London. They are not, as they could and should be, the kingpin and true custodians of the whole capital city; and because London is in this respect unlike every other ancient city and town in the realm, its position and influence, and the sense of municipal pride of its citizens, have all been much diminished. In this admirable book I. G. Doolittle shows how this situation has come about, and traces the reasons for the survival of the City of London and its Livery Companies. It is a fascinating, well-researched and well-written account of an important theme in the history of London, and one can only marvel that nobody has written about it before.

The trouble began in the early seventeenth century, when the ancient City (still largely bounded by the walls built some fifteen hundred years earlier by the Romans) could no longer accommodate its rapidly growing population, already by 1600 numbering about 200,000 persons. New settlements had begun to spring up outside the confines of the City's jurisdiction, in (for instance) such places as Stepney, Finsbury and Covent Garden, and the age of the London suburb had begun.

By the 1630s these developments posed a considerable threat to the prosperity of both the Corporation and the Livery Companies, for in the new suburbs traders could in practice ply their crafts uncontrolled by any established municipal authority. The answer was, of course, as Dr Doolittle says, "for the City to assume responsibility for its extra-mural outlaws; and this was a solution only too obvious to contemporaries". In 1633 Charles I's Privy Council accordingly asked the City "whether they would accept of part of the suburbs into their jurisdiction and liberty for better government". But, alas, the Corporation refused, as it did again in the following year when the request was renewed; and so Charles I went ahead with the establishment of a short-lived "New Incorporation" for the suburbs, which collapsed soon afterwards during the Civil War.

In what is perhaps the key passage in the whole book Doolittle neatly summarizes the far-reaching results of these events:

It takes little imagination to realise the importance of the Corporation's decision in the 1630's, when it declined to accept responsibility for those living outside its walls. If it had done so, it would have undertaken the duties of the London County Council two hundred and fifty years before that body appeared; and in so doing it would have started a new and exhilarating chapter in its history. It would have been spared the rivalry of those authorities which at length had to be created for the government of the suburbs and it would have been protected from the attacks of the reformers in the democratic age. It is therefore scarcely surprising that the

resolutions of the 1630's have been dubbed "The Great Refusal".

It is hardly an over-simplification to say that from that day to this the City Corporation has adopted a posture of strict defence of its established rights, regardless of the consequences for the rest of London. Much of Doolittle's story is therefore concerned with the numerous attempts made by successive governments to reform the Corporation or to adapt it to the needs of the whole capital. Its two most dangerous moments were in the 1830s, when all the major municipal corporations in England and Wales except that of London were remodelled by the Whigs; and in 1884, when the bill proposed by Sir William Harcourt, Home Secretary in Gladstone's second administration, for the establishment of a strong unified Central Council for the whole of London, was actually given a second reading before, unfortunately, being abandoned through pressure of other business.

The Corporation has also had some other nasty moments, notably in 1853 and 1893, 1921 and 1957 (more Royal Commissions), but it always managed to survive, at least once (in 1882-4) by dubious means which were the subject of investigation by a Select Committee of the House of Commons. I. G. Doolittle thinks that far from being moribund there has in recent years been a revival in Guildhall and Livery Company life, which is today as vigorous as it has ever been; and he concludes that "The remarkable survival of the City of London and its Livery Companies seems set to continue for many years to come."

However this may be (and Mr Livingstone's GLC no doubt has some views), nobody is likely to disagree with the two quotations aptly placed on the title-page of this elegant and important book. The first is by Disraeli: "We must remember that this country is not governed by logic; but by Parliament"; and the second is from the report of the Royal Commission of 1957-60: "But logic has its limits and the position of the City lies outside them."

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# Turning professional

Michael Carver

DAVID FRASER

*And We Shall Shock Them: The British Army in the Second World War*  
429pp. Hodder and Stoughton.  
£12.95.  
0 340 27085 3

Having previously written the official biography of Field Marshal Alanbrooke, David Fraser has now faced the challenge of recording the history of the British Army in the Second World War, a task not undertaken hitherto. There have been histories of the war itself, and books of every kind and length on aspects of it, but nobody – historian, soldier or aspirant for a PhD – had set his hand before this to an assessment of the part played by the army raised in the United Kingdom. Anyone attempting an equivalent task for the First World War would have been bound to think of the British Army as embracing not only the Indian Army but also the armies of the Dominions and the formations raised in the colonies. For the Second World War, General Fraser has found it difficult to differentiate between the activities of formations raised in the home country and those originating elsewhere in the Commonwealth. He makes the important point that, although the Dominions and colonies contributed combat formations – Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India to the Middle East and Mediterranean; India and Australia to Malaya, and the former very significantly to Burma; and Canada to Italy and North West Europe – the United Kingdom everywhere provided the essential framework: even in Burma there was one British soldier for every three Indians. But his chief aim, which he keeps firmly in mind, is to record and comment on the story of the army raised in the United Kingdom.

He has chosen a curious title and an inappropriate one, unless it is intended to be ironic. His account emphasizes strongly that, when the "three corners of the world" took up arms, the Germans in 1939, the Italians in 1940 and the Japanese at the end of 1941, the shock, except in the case of the Italians, was not provided by the British army, but by its opponents. Until the tide turned against the Germans at El Alamein in October 1942, the record of the British army

shocked its own public more than it did its opponents, apart from the false dawn of Ritchie's victory over Rommel round Tobruk at the end of 1941.

Fraser is in no doubt about where to lay the blame for this sorry state of affairs. He divides it between the politicians and the military in the 1920s and 1930s. Both, reflecting popular attitudes at the time, reacted against the experience of what was then known as the Great War. Two factors were held to be responsible for the dreadful toll in 1914-18 of 950,000 British dead: involvement in a Continental war in the first place, and an obsession with going on to the offensive – both being the result of French influence. The politicians were determined to avoid a repetition of such a commitment and, right up until Chamberlain's last-minute reversal after Hitler's pursuit of policies designed to avoid it. Occasionally they wavered sufficiently to consider a very limited commitment to the Continent in order either to persuade Belgium to resist German pressure or to occupy airfields in that country. The soldiers were only too happy to give priority, and such thought as they gave to anything beyond their own regiments, to "Imperial Policing". In this they were encouraged by Liddell Hart, in spite of his enthusiasm for a mechanized, armoured army.

The result was that in 1939 both the British and the Indian armies were unprepared in every way to face the highly professional armies of Germany and Japan, the latter with years of active service experience in China. The British army had spent most of its time in garrison duties and consisted overwhelmingly of infantry battalions and cavalry regiments, ill-equipped for modern war. When rearmament was undertaken in 1935, the navy and air force had priority, and the effort of the Royal Artillery, which had played such a dominant part in 1914-18, had been significantly diverted into Anti-Aircraft Command by the obsessive anxiety over the Luftwaffe's ability to break destruction on Britain's cities. Each arm tended to live in its own private world, and training for the employment of all arms together in

battle had been grossly inadequate. The belated rush to mechanize the army had not been accompanied by an agreed or authorized operational doctrine as to how mechanized forces should be used. The one and only Mobile Division in the United Kingdom was not even fit to be deployed to France until May 1940, and was then split up.

Soldiers tended to lay the blame for the initial failures in Norway, France and Belgium in 1940, in Greece and Crete in 1941, and in Malaya and Burma in 1942, on the lack of air support. This was undoubtedly a contributory factor, especially in Crete, but Fraser makes it clear that, with the possible exception of Greece and Crete, it was not the primary cause of failure. That was the general unpreparedness, in every sense, of the British and Indian armies to meet tough, professional soldiers of the calibre of the Germans and the Japanese on the battlefield. Having made that point in his commentaries on the campaigns which preceded the emergence, as the dominating military figures, of Montgomery in the Middle East and Slim in India, he turns from blame to praise for the way in which the army was transformed by the professional hand of those commanders who knew their business and had the self-confidence and determination to lead the way. Alanbrooke and Montgomery predominate among them.

Fraser's comments are fair and balanced throughout, and he does not hesitate to take an unorthodox line. This is as true of his assessment of the characters of the principal actors as it is of his comments on events. There are some brilliant vignettes, the most notable being that of Wingate. Alanbrooke, Montgomery and Slim are Fraser's heroes, but he is not blind to Montgomery's faults, especially his insistence that all his battles went entirely according to plan. Fraser's access to Alanbrooke's papers has been invaluable in enabling him to illuminate such controversies as that over the failure of Operation Goodwood – the attempt to thrust three armoured divisions out of the breadbasket east of Caen on July 18, 1944.

## Diffident persuaders

Paul Smith

M. L. SANDERS and PHILIP M. TAYLOR  
*British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-18*  
320pp. Macmillan, £25.  
0 333 29275 8

The public schools' depreciation (though not necessarily disuse) of lying and boasting made it difficult for the British ruling classes to take enthusiastically to propaganda when the nation entered the first war in its history in which popular opinion at home and abroad really counted. They conducted it discreetly, kept it as long as they could in the hands of gentlemen, surrendered it only reluctantly and partially to jumped-up journalists, and in 1918 shut down with relief the extensive machine which four years of war had brought into being.

"I am venturing to send to you. I am sure that you will not consider this an impertinence. I trust you will not think me intrusive or misunderstand my motive" – the repeated apologies of Gilbert Parker, sending confidential matter to his American friend, convey the prevailing tone of British official propaganda, at least until 1918. Masterman's men in the War Propaganda Bureau at Wellington House addressed themselves to the educated opinion-formers in neutral and Allied countries with a heavily literary output dedicated in the main to not overstating Britain's case and to distributed as carefully to conceal its official origin (the Chinese received it through the Religious Trust Society). The emphasis was on facts, soberly employed, though standards slipped occasionally when the opportunity for some particularly pleasing literary device

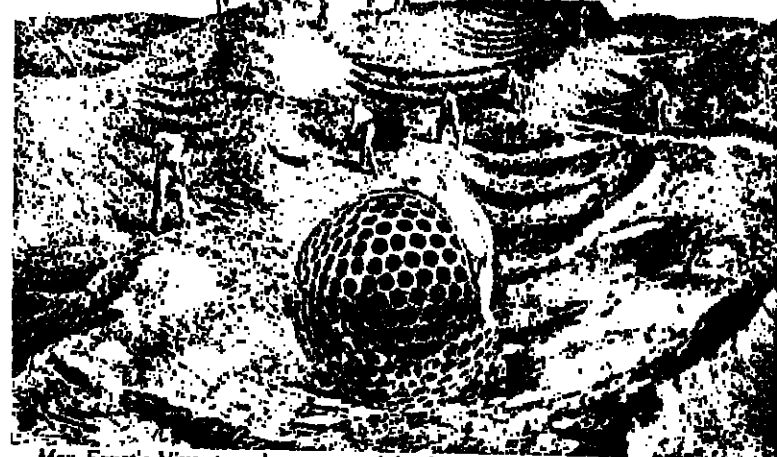
presented itself. Masterman did not really believe the famous yarn of the corpse-conversion factory, but he used it all the same. No one, however, would have dreamed of fabricating Bismarck's cries; not that they needed to, when Messrs Nietzsche, Treitschke, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain had spent so much of their time throwing off aphorisms which, in or out of context, lent themselves admirably to the purpose of demonstrating the dedication of the Kaiserreich to the domination of Europe by brute force.

All this kept an assorted band of writers, publicists, and intellectuals out of harm's way in an atmosphere perhaps not entirely divorced from that of *Put Out More Flags*. Inevitably, however, the newspaper men concluded that they could do the job better. In 1917, the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, Robert Donald, wrote two critical reports for his friend, Lloyd George, calling for a more centralized direction and a less defensive approach in British propaganda, while Northcliffe's general manager, Pomeroy Burton, assessing work in the US, attacked the "let-us-case-speak-for-itself" policy which he felt had made no impact on American mass opinion. It was mass opinion that was increasingly in question as the need grew to gear the home front up to further efforts and the opportunity loomed to make a serious propaganda assault on the morale of the enemy. Lloyd George turned readily to the presumptive experts in mass opinion formation – both he and they confusing sales with influence – and in 1918 put Beaverbrook in charge of a Ministry of Information and Northcliffe, for whose energies he perhaps sought a diversion at the head of a new Department of Enemy Propaganda at Crewe House. The Wellington House literary pamphlets yielded to the mass-produced, leaflet-favoured, by the

"press-gang", and by the end of the war balloons and aircraft were alleviating any paper shortage in the German trenches by delivering over a hundred thousand sheets a day.

M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor have written a scholarly study of the development of what they see as "the classic model on which other governments were subsequently to base their own propaganda machinery". They concentrate on work directed to overseas audiences, though taking in the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee and the National War Aims Committee at home, and on literary rather than pictorial forms (anyone interested in film propaganda will still need to consult Nicholas Reeves's unpublished thesis). The reader is deftly guided through the organizational maze, which involved the Foreign, Home, and War Offices as well as such *ad hoc* bodies as Wellington House, and was not entirely rationalized even by the setting up of the Department of Information in March 1918. Consideration of the methods, distribution, and content of propaganda is followed by useful case studies of work in the US and among the enemy, the former drawing on the House, Willert, and Wiseman papers at Yale, the latter on French as well as British archives. Obvious slips are few, though, for example, Franz von Papen appears as "Pritz" and the German helmet as a "pickelhaube", while in the quotation on page 239 "vols" should surely be "voies".

The authors bring out well the way in which change in the organization and nature of propaganda directed overseas were linked to broader issues. Lloyd George's inhibition of the press barons is seen as part of a general purpose to by-pass the Foreign Office and weaken its control over the



Max Ernst's Vivant sur son globe-fantôme, belle et parée de ses rêves. Perturbation masquée (1929). In the foreground, his performed planet around in the background Caspar David Friedrich has climbed his mountain, and turned into a tiny rural Boudier. The picture is taken from Max Ernst: L'opinion (187pp with 274 illustrations. Thames and Hudson. £20.0 500 2337 3), a study of the period around 1930 when Max Ernst created a series of large collages and other works dominated by "Loplop, Bird Superior", a mask for Ernst himself and a transfiguration of the vulture in da Vinci's Virgin of the Rocks.

Fraser emphasizes two lessons which are applicable to British military policy today. The first is the folly of imagining that we can opt out of a commitment to fight on land in order to maintain a balance of power in Europe favourable to our interests, at the same time keeping potentially hostile nations away from the other shore of the Channel. In support of this he quotes an apt comment of the Duke of Wellington:

Admitting the truth of the expense, I say that the country has not a choice between Army and no Army. They must have a large and efficient Army, one capable of meeting the enemy abroad, or they must expect to meet him at home; and then farewell to all considerations of measures of greater or lesser expense, and to the ease, the luxury and happiness of England.

The other is the fallacy of relying on a purely defensive strategy. He has some words of wisdom of his own on that subject:

An army which thinks only in defensive terms is doomed. It yields initiative and advantage in time and space to an enemy – even an enemy

inferior in numbers. It loses its sense of the hunter, the opportunist. It settles down to observe, wait, endure and probably withdraw. No army, regardless of numerical balance, has won battles with a indifferent a spirit.

The German victory in France in 1940, the Japanese defeat of Percival's army in Malaya and Singapore, resulting in the capture of more prisoners than they had soldiers; Rommel's defeat of Ritchie round Tobruk in the summer of 1942; O'Connor's victory over the Italians in the Libyan desert with Platt's and Cunningham's over them in Abyssinia in 1941, were all examples of this truth. Those who rely complacently on the belief that an attacker requires a superiority of three to one in manpower before he stands a chance of success should take this to heart.

In a book which covers so wide a field and so many events, it is not an easy matter to maintain a satisfactory balance between narrative and comment, general description and detail. General Fraser has done it well. Soldiers and historians alike should be grateful to him.

The new men had their own ideas of foreign policy. Beaverbrook told the prime minister in June 1918: "since our appeal lies not to the diplomatic representatives of foreign countries, but to the public opinion of those countries, our methods must be different from those of the Foreign Office." They have a diplomacy of their own – a popular diplomacy – and for this reason we must have our own special organisation. The proposition that nation should speak unto nation without the intermediary of ambassadors, or that publicists should operate upon foreign opinion according to their own estimate of what line would be most avidly swallowed, led naturally to the propagandists attempting to lead rather than to follow government policy. Intent on subverting the subject nationalities of the Habsburg Empire, for instance, Wickham Steed and R. W. Seton-Watson were eager to hold out prospects to the South Slavs which outran any official decision and were not easy to reconcile with the views of Britain's Italian ally. Northcliffe in the end was rebuffed by Lloyd George in his attempt to have the propagandists muscle in on the definition of peace terms.

What good came of it at last? Sanders and Taylor sensibly refrain from pretending that there is any means of knowing. They indicate cautiously both to rebut criticism of the early propagandists as amateurish and ineffectual, and to discount the larger of the claims made for their successors of 1918. Crewe House may marginally have accelerated the break-up of Austria-Hungary. It suited soldiers like Ludendorff to attribute a large part of Germany's collapse to the insidious efforts of the propagandists. No one can tell. Perhaps a hundred thousand leaflets a day is enough to make anyone surrender, whatever the

NORMAN MAILER

*Ancient Evenings*  
709pp. Macmillan. £9.95.  
0 333 34025 6

Until its final revision, *Ancient Evenings* carried the subtitle "The Egyptian Novel". It was a helpful hint that what was to follow was meant to be quite unlike the so-called "American novel" or the English, French, German or Russian novel. *Ancient Evenings* is indeed the strangest of Norman Mailer's books, and its oddity does not in any important way have to do either with its Egyptian setting or with the exotic career – exotic even by ancient Egyptian standards – of Menenhet, the protagonist-narrator whose four lives, including three reincarnations, span 180 years (1290 to 1100 BC) of the nineteenth and twentieth dynasties (1320 to 1121 BC). What is remarkable here is the degree to which Mailer has naturalized himself as an ancient Egyptian, so that he writes as if saturated with the mentality and the governing assumptions, some of which he revises rather freely, of a culture in which the idea of the human is markedly different from what it has been in the West for the last 3,500 years or so. Mailer has never before tried anything so perilous, and the prodigious demands he makes on the reader are a clue to his ambitions. This is at once his most accomplished and his most problematic work.

Of the twenty-three books Mailer has written so far, only *Ancient Evenings* achieves the magnitude which can give a retrospective order and enhancement to everything else. Up to now it has been possible to think of him as perhaps a great writer, but one who had yet to write his major book. Many commentators have mistakenly credited him here, and in his last novel *The Executioner's Song*, with a new degree of self-effacement. Looking back from the new book one can see even more clearly than before that the central condition of nearly all his writing depends not on some prior sense of self, the famous Mailer ego, but rather on self-fragmentation and dispersal. Even when, as is so often the case, Mailer is his own subject, he cannot be said to exist simply in the narrative that tells his story, but is to be found instead within a larger, expressive structure of which his voice is only one part looking for other parts. Just as it radically reduces his literary, let alone his personal identity, to assume that the voice in *Armies of the Night* refers us directly to the "real" Mailer, so it is equally mistaken to assume that because that voice is absent from *Ancient Evenings* he has thereby – and suddenly – become invisible.

Quite the reverse. The book comes into focus only when we are able to recognize the complicated way in which it is the most self-revealing of his works. Menenhet, for example, carries out the implications of Mailer's more directly autobiographical writings because even as he tells stories about himself he is by that very process trying to put himself together from several different – remembered versions. This is also the case when Mailer writes about a march on the Pentagon or a championship fight. He treats the earlier events as if he were already a soul or a spirit. The Mailer of the later time not only records but contends with earlier versions of himself, until the work is a record of the abrasions out of which truth can be told without the fear of retaliation, a millennium back at the palace of Rameses IX.

Whether at the palace or at the pyramid, the scene of the novel is a scene of telling, of narration, of recollection. At the palace, where the reader mostly finds himself, Menenhet and Meni are more deviously positioned than they are in the pyramid. The elder is telling the stories of his lives to the Pharaoh, who hopes by listening and interrogation to become more closely identified with one of Mailer's most engaging characters. But as the Pharaoh is aged, he nestles between his mother, Hatheferti (who is Menenhet's grandfather and, for many years, his

just once to learn all those things, and then molder forever in the weeds... There is some sort of divine collaboration going on."

Books of sustained visionary ambition – and this is true even of *Paradise Lost* or *Moby-Dick* – are bound to have stretches of tiresome exposition, phrases that are ludicrous, whole scenes that, as Johnson remarked, should have been not only difficult but impossible. *Ancient Evenings* has Honey-Ball's scenes of spellbinding in "The Book of Queens". Nearly anything can happen here, and does, and what is remarkable is not that the American reviewers found things to make fun of, but that the risks usually pay off, moments of subliminal ecstasy, visionary descriptions of royal personages, of pools at sunrise and gardens which bring on a kind of sexual swooning, of floatings down the Nile. Mailer seems more at home in the writing than in any of his books except for *Why Are We in Vietnam?* He luxuriates, sometimes to the limits of patience and beyond, in accounts of Egyptian life, in the power put into play during a royal dinner party, in details of costume and what must have been at best a truly awful cuisine. Near the beginning Meni calmly tells us what it feels like, moment by moment, to be eviscerated and embalmed, and there are equally confident accounts of the practice of magic and of the wholly chaotic polytheism of the Egyptians.

Mailer has imagined a culture that gives formal, and not merely anthropological sanction to what in his other works often seems eccentric or plausibly metaphysical, like his obsessions with "psychic darts" and mind-reading, with immortality, with battles of the gods (Liston and Patterson, it now seems, were later versions of the Egyptian gods Horus and Set), with villainous homosexuality, with magic and sorcery, and with exorcism as an encoding of psychic failure or success. Having so often written as if the self had several versions, he is completely at ease with Egyptian names for the seven spirits of the self that continue to exist in different degrees of intensity after death.

Two spirit-forms that figure importantly in this book are the Ka and the Khaibit. The Ka, for which the term Double is a useful but inadequate substitute, is born with a person to whom it belongs and bears his exact resemblance; even after death it is that part of a person that requires the food and drink left for it in the tomb. It also requires sensual gratification. Thus, the Ka of, say, a third incarnation could encounter the Ka of the first and have sexual commerce with him – which means with himself – just as could a Ka with his own Khaibit, or Memory. In fact, Meni, who died mysteriously at twenty or twenty-one and thinks that he may have been one of the reincarnations of Menenhet, finds himself, soon after the novel begins, kneeling on the floor of the Pyramid of Khufu with the elder Menenhet's member in his mouth, and while it is an abhorrent experience he realizes that he may be coping, as it were, with himself and that the unpleasantness is a kind of preparation for his passage from the Land of the Dead through the horrors of the Duat to either the upper or the lower world. It is possible to assume that the two forms remain fixed in this position – a time, we can with difficulty work out, is roughly 100 BC – while they visualize the immensely long night of storytelling, the Night of the Fig, when any truth can be told without the fear of retaliation, a millennium back at the palace of Rameses IX.

Whether at the palace or at the pyramid, the scene of the novel is a scene of telling, of narration, of recollection. At the palace, where the reader mostly finds himself, Menenhet and Meni are more deviously positioned than they are in the pyramid. The elder is telling the stories of his lives to the Pharaoh, who hopes by listening and interrogation to become more closely identified with one of Mailer's most engaging characters. But as the Pharaoh is aged, he nestles between his mother, Hatheferti (who is Menenhet's grandfather and, for many years, his

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## In pyramid and palace

Richard Poirier

lover) and the Pharaoh (whom little Meni, using his powers of clairvoyance, knows to be his real father) while his reputed father (Hatheferti's brother as well as her husband and Overseer of the Cosmetic Box) sulks to one side before eventually absenting himself.

The novel does not yield to summary or to any clear sorting out of family trees, and depends instead on the blurring of distinctions between persons or between historical events and visionary ones. Divided into seven books, nearly anything can happen here, and does, and what is remarkable is not that the American reviewers found things to make fun of, but that the risks usually pay off, moments of subliminal ecstasy, visionary descriptions of royal personages, of pools at sunrise and gardens which bring on a kind of sexual swooning, of floatings down the Nile. Mailer seems more at home in the writing than in any of his books except for *Why Are We in Vietnam?* He luxuriates, sometimes to the limits of patience and beyond, in accounts of Egyptian life, in the power put into play during a royal dinner party, in details of costume and what must have been at best a truly awful cuisine. Near the beginning Meni calmly tells us what it feels like, moment by moment, to be eviscerated and embalmed, and there are equally confident accounts of the practice of magic and of the wholly chaotic polytheism of the Egyptians.

After getting acquainted and finding their way into the great Pyramid of Khufu, they begin their recollection, which is also their attempted recollection of themselves. Even at the outset, and with only two figures in question, the effort to distinguish between them takes us into a thicket. And that is where we are meant to be. We are meant to understand that multiple identities, identities that in their passage through time come to bleed with one another, are common among the fantastic array of Egyptian gods – and therefore among those humans for whom the gods are a paradigm of mortal existence. Any Egyptian of high birth, for example, can consider himself an Osiris, the greatest of the gods (but not always), and can find a pattern for his own past life, or anyone else's past life, in the pains and indignities that were visited upon him. It is therefore appropriate that Meni, in his bewilderment about himself, should ask Menenhet to tell the stories that make up the long second book, "The Book of the Gods".

The story of Osiris, Isis, and of the bitter, buggery-ridden battles between their son, Horus, and his uncle Set is a phantasmagoric version of much that happens to Menenhet as his story unfolds in subsequent books. Menenhet, born the son of a whore, has an inventive skill as a character which brings him to the attention of the extraordinarily beautiful and imposing Rameses II or, as he is called, Unsemerre. At his side, and assisted by the Pharaoh's pet lion, Herra-Ra, Menenhet helps turn disaster into victory against the Hitites at the battle of Kadesh. But he is then held responsible for the death of Herra-Ra, who sickened from eating too many amputated Hitite hands, and is exiled for fifteen years as a supervisor of a remote gold mine in the desert. It is there that he learns from a dying friend that a man may be born again by dying during the consumption of sexual intercourse. Picking his way back into the court of Unsemerre, he becomes the commander of troops and then Governor of the Secured – which means that he supervises the Pharaoh's "little queens" while being forbidden their sexual favours.

He breaks this interdiction with Honey-Ball in retaliation against Unsemerre for having taken him by "both mouths" before Kadesh. And when Unsemerre repeats this violation, this time in the company of some of the "little queens", Menenhet is driven to the still more dangerous revenge of embarking on an affair with the most exalted of the queens, Neferiti, who turns out to be his own ancestor. Rameses II, while the younger his grandfather, is stabbed to death by the Crown Prince Hatheferti (who is Menenhet's grandfather and, for many years, his

just once to learn all those things, and then molder forever in the weeds... There is some sort of divine collaboration going on."

thereby becomes his own father, though his and, above all, Neferiti's parentage must be hidden from Unsemerre, who is persuaded by Honey-Ball that he has begotten the child with her. And so it goes. The urgent, exploratory stories told by Menenhet and the others are accompanied throughout by an attendant detail so exasperatingly complete as to suggest now and then that Mailer, like Pynchon, cannot resist displays of his encyclopedic researches – said to have included a total absorption of the Egyptian funerary literature called the Book of the Dead.

Mailer has convinced himself that the book must be dense if it is also to be authentic. Thus Meni needs to be told the intricate story of the gods, the Pharaoh needs to be told exhaustively about his ancestors, Menenhet needs to rehearse his lives because each of them is convinced that only a person who can remember and explain his deeds when alive, or when he somehow partook of the life of another, can pass out of the Land of the Dead. And because of the endless mirroring of one life in another and in the lives of the gods, there is, for the anxious spirit, no limit to recollection, no ascertainable boundary.

While over the course of the seven books the various tales do manage to achieve some degree of narrative sequence and development – as they would have to do when all the characters are in search of some kind of teleology – such book also spirals out of and back into the scene of telling, and even that scene is set in a time when events have already become encrusted with centuries of re-telling and interpretation. No American reviewer of the novel has yet noticed the crucial admission by Menenhet to Meni in the last chapter: that what might be called the Egyptian "gospel" Menenhet pass through the Duat)

### June Books

#### Fiction

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but rather to get away from the loneliness, darkness, waste and dissolution which are, interestingly enough, the conditions Maller has worried about since the mid-1950s as peculiar to the fate of the writer, especially the American writer, in the last half of this century.

It is in this context that one should consider his obsession with buggery. The obsession has in the past carried Maller into a metaphysics of human biological creativity as a compensation for meaninglessness (the forty-six chromosomes in each cell of the body are, he tells us in *The Prisoner of Sex*, "a nest of hieroglyphics") and from there to a religion of artistic creativity (he had already observed in *The Armies of the Night* that these hieroglyphics are "so much like primitive writing"). Like the building of Hell in the nether regions by Milton's Satan, buggery for Maller is a perverse response to God's invitation that we join him in the creation. For some centuries - long before Rojack in *An American Dream* refers to an evil girlfriend's backside as "den Teufel" - the buggery has been associated with the Devil's terrain. In nearly all his work Maller at some point contemplates the significance of a juxtaposition: concisely described by Lawrence when in "Pornography and Obscenity" he observed that "the sex functions and the excrementary functions . . . work so close together, yet they are, so to speak, so utterly different in direction. Sex is a creative flow, the excrementary flow is towards dissolution, decreation . . .".

Though Menenhetet, like the Maller of "The Metaphysics of the Belly" (*The Presidential Papers*), offers positive theories of scatology, the anus is mostly imagined as the site of evil. But there is also for Maller a kind of art which is a trope for buggery. Writing about Genet he has referred to those aesthetic acts which "shift from the creation of meaning to the destruction of it", offering as further examples "the therapy of the surrealist artist, of Dada, of Beat". And he continues, speaking now of his own involvement in this dilemma: "jaded, deadened, deprived from our roots, dulled in leaden rage, inhabiting the centre of illness of the age, it becomes more exorcising each year for us to perform the civilizing act of contributing to a collective meaning." Ancient Evidences represents such an attempt, haunted by failure, to discover "collective meaning", to create spiritual (and literary) genealogies that are as strong and mysterious as biological ones.

Questions of origin soon become, for Maller, questions also about originality and authorship. It is impossible to claim either of these, so

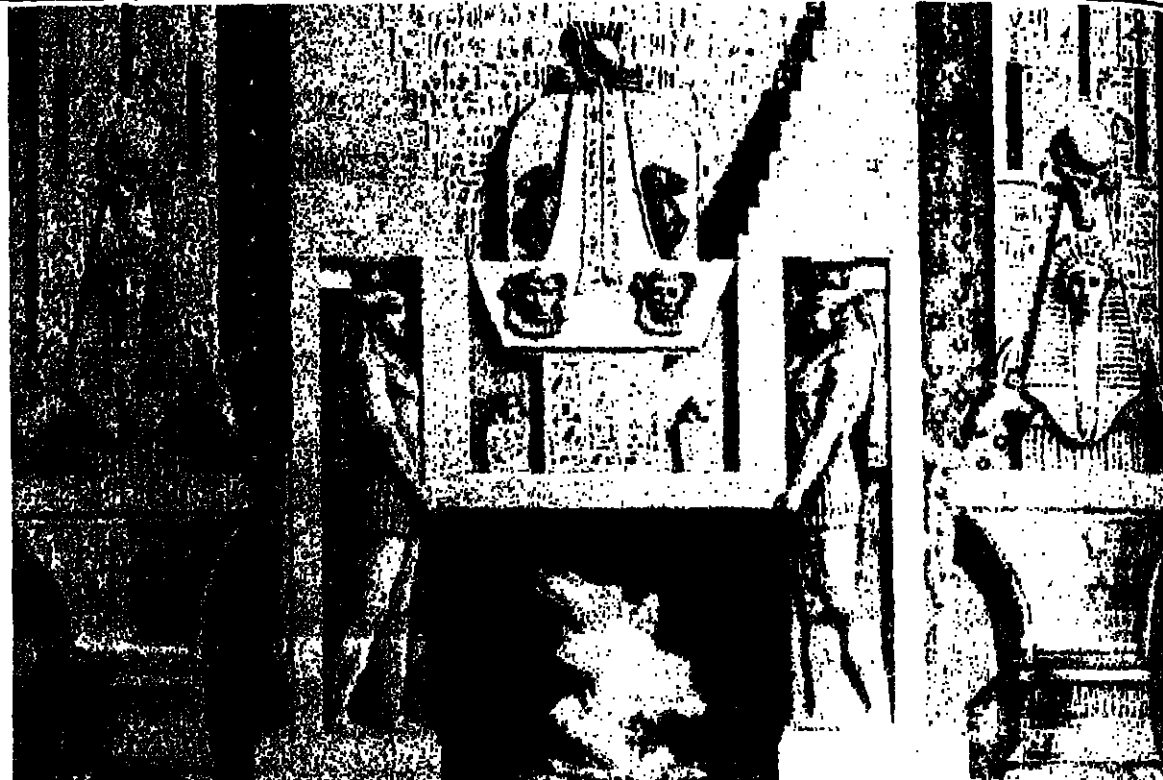
the book will tell us, without first accepting one's incalculable obligations to a marvellous but murky antecedence. Maller's (and our) debts to the past, it is suggested, are enormous; they are also mysteriously entangled and untraceable. It is therefore a mistake to suggest, as some reviewers have done, that because Menenhetet is given "that look of character supported by triumph which comes to powerful men when they are sixty and still strong" he is meant to represent Maller, or that he is Hemingway, Maller's precursor. Maller partakes both of Meni and Menenhetet, who at the end are transformed into yet another dual figure: a triumphant Icarus-Daedalus. In the final scene Menenhetet embraces and dissolves into the young man's Ka as it tries to escape the destructive force of "the abominable onslaught of offal" and to ascend the ladder of lights, knowing it will take not goodness to get to the top, but strength.

The joining has been made possible because Meni comes at last to accept all the stories he has been listening to, and, along with these, all the burdens of the past. "The tales he has told our Pharaoh, had been told for me as well. It was I whom he wanted to trust him." He cannot disown any of it because he cannot even know for sure that he did not somehow father himself or father his own father, whoever that might be, as did Ra in Egyptian mythology. Way back in the book we were told that "The God begets the God who will be his father. For the Gods live in the time that has passed, and time that is to come."

Genealogies confound one another to create a future that can call on the assembled strengths of Menenhetet, Meni, all the characters they have loved, the Egyptian gods, along with their latest manifestations in Christian mythology, and, not least, the now enriched figures of Maller's earlier writings and earlier selves. The "I" in the last paragraphs is a composite of all these but it is also the creative spirit with whom Maller associates himself in an apocalyptic vision that could anticipate either the coming of, in Yeats's phrase, "the fabulous, formless darkness" of Christianity, or the last phase of our own civilization:

A pain is coming that will be like no pain felt before. I hear the scream of earth exploding. In this terror, vast as the abyss, I still know more than fear. Here at the centre of pain is radiance. May my hope of heaven now prove equal to my ignorance of where I go. Whether I am the Second or the First Menenhetet, or the creature of our twice seven separate souls and lights, I would hardly declare, and so I do not know if I will labor in greed forever among the demonic or serve some noble purpose I cannot name. By this I am told that I must enter into the power of the word. For the first sound to come out of the void had to traverse the fundament of pain. So I cry out in the voice of the newly born at the mystery of my first breath, and enter the Boat of Ra.

This is, then, Maller's "portrait of the artist as a young man", but it does not allow, as Joyce's does, for much distinction between that "artist" and the author of the book. If we are reminded of Joyce it is certainly not for the ironic reservations about Stephen implied in the last chapter of *A Portrait* and the first section of *Ulysses*, or even for the moment on the sea shore when Stephen imagines that "his soul had arisen from the grave of boyhood, spurning her graveclothes. Yes! Yes! Yes! He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artist whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable." This is a beautiful but forever embarrassing moment in the long history of the artist *ex nihilo*, and Joyce meant to bring into question the prospects of anyone in the twentieth century who chooses to "enter into the power of the word". Maller has always been frighteningly naive about this "power" and especially - as was revealed by his involvement with Jack Abbott - the privileges that should be accorded it; and he fully endorses Meni's grandiloquence. This is his most audacious book largely because behind it all is the desire, once and for all, to claim some ultimate spiritual and cultural status for the teller of stories, the "Writer" which is yet another ancient and perhaps pernicious story, though Maller will always need to believe every word of it.



A design for a chimneypiece and chairs in the Egyptian manner, from G. B. Piranesi's *Diverse Maniere d'adornare i Cammini*. 1769, an etching included in the exhibition *The Inspiration of Egypt at the Brighton Museum*, reviewed in last week's TLS.

## Steering clear of stereotypes

Peter Kemp

WILLIAM STYRON

*This Quiet Dust* and other writings  
305pp. Cape. £12.50.  
0 224 02129 X

Slavery enthralled William Styron. In *This Quiet Dust* - a collection of essays on "matters which have either bedevilled or beguiled me in recent years" - he rarely escapes the subject for Negro slavery in the Deep South is a perennial preoccupation. Analogues to it are seen in oppressive contemporary phenomena: concentration camps show "slavery in its ultimate embodiment"; literature about prison life "resembles . . . the historiography of American Negro Slavery". Magnetically, Styron's mind pulls a multitude of topics back towards what for him is "perhaps the most compelling theme in history, including the history of our own time - that of the catastrophic propensity on the part of human beings to try to dominate one another."

This propensity, he stresses, is fostered by the imposing of stereotype and generalization upon a world that teems with the various and the particular. Crudely generalizing systems furnished blueprints for the outrages he keeps returning to: Negro slavery, Nazi persecution, American massacres in Vietnam. But Styron insists that commentary on such matters is itself fatally prone to lapse into wholesale dismissal and the imposing of coarsely schematic theory. Generalization about mass atrocity is something he repeatedly deplores. Simplified versions of slavery or persecution in drama-documentaries such as *Roots* or *Holocaust* are seen as virtually conniving in the way of thinking they supposedly attack.

Models of reality made up of simplified blocks are, in Styron's essays, endlessly bombarded by hard detail. "Easy generalizations about the South" are dismissed as cracked since "there are many Souths, and the experience of each Southerner is modified by the subtlest conditions of self and family environment and God knows what else". For Styron, broad statements can be equated with narrow-mindedness. Mental horizons are widened by poring over the particular. This idea extends into his literary criticism. Thomas Wolfe is taken to task for "a tendency to generalize promiscuously about places and things which demand, if anything, narrow and delicate particularization". The prison letters of James Blake, on the other hand, are applauded as the work of a writer with a "banyan eye for detail": one who is "steadfastly an individualist, telling his own truth". Styron's concern for what he calls "difficult complexity" makes him a didactic essayist. These pieces are

generally long reviews - take clichéd responses to a subject and pepper them with facts he has stockpiled from the book he's scrutinizing. While rarely offering much in the way of stylistic excitement, they are scrupulously informative - and generally so, as well. Humour and a sense of proportion go along with a regard for individuality. In Styron's mind, as prerequisites for moral sanity. What particularly shook him about the hostile black reaction to *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, his treatment of the early-nineteenth-century slave revolt, was its "lopsided animus . . . no pretence at balance". Linking together the rogues' gallery of American militarist monsters these essays indict - from MacArthur to Calley - is the common factor of "a fatal humannessness".

As if to demonstrate the soundness of his recommendations, Styron's essays occasionally take a wrong turn by disregarding them. Strangely, in view of his alertness to the dangers of generalization, he can sometimes succumb to it: as when the jury in the trial of a black murderer are blurred dismissively together as "Respectability in its pure, concentrated essence like a Norman Rockwell tableau". On the subject of critics - "voracious little barracudas", "jackals" - Styron finds it hard to stand by his own beliefs about steering clear of *en masse* denigration.

Such substitution of rhetoric for reasoning sporadically dulls the essays. And it is not only done to disparage. Styron has a penchant for portentous hyperbole that blots out precisely those qualities he most values. Praising the raw immediacy of a description of a US Army doctor fighting to save a horribly burned soldier, for example, he converts it in his summary into a piece of marmoreal unreality: "Two human beings . . . locked in the immemorial struggle against inexplicable fate." When not flattened under such stasesquous stuff, the essays spring appealingly to life. Crammed with idiosyncratic detail and epitomizing anecdote, they show a constant, decent determination to get at the facts and face up to awkward issues. Styron's admirably direct account of his misfired attempt to help a young black criminal displays this particularly clearly. Like some other essays in this volume, it brings out too, the almost symbiotic relationship that seems to exist between American writers and prisoners: men of the pen drawn towards men in the Pen. At one point or another Maller, Miller, Algren, Capote, and Purdy all turn up with a penitentiary.

Though dealing mainly with oppression, Styron's essays are never oppressive; he throws his makes into various hearts of darkness are always enlightening. And amongst "the prevailing, common subjects are some brighter ones. There is a lively, tongue-in-cheek review of *The Big Love*, a biography of a Hollywood starlet, by

her mother which begins strikingly: "There's one thing I want to make clear right off, my baby was a virgin the day she met Errol Flynn." A number of essays attractively evoke the background to Styron's early years, the Virginia Tidewater region, which he considers "the oldest part of our country". Celebrating features peculiar to it - a quaint mix of Indian and English place names, the "throat-slurred" local speech - he also pays tribute to its rather melancholy beauty, especially as seen in its waterways - brackish tidal streams and broad estuaries dotted with fish stakes and oyster boats, sunrise soaking "blood-red through the milk of morning mist".

"The James river", Styron remarks, "was the absolute and dominating presence of my childhood and early youth." It seems to have left him with continuing responsiveness to rivers. One of the best pieces in this book starts a journey down the Nile, with Styron "quite simply smitten with love for this watercourse". The incidentally different - drifting, foliaceous, "mosk bulrushes", canals and minarets - but when the "pearl-gray, aqueous" light of evening sends waves of contentment through him and he has a sense of *deja vu*, Styron's feelings are surely being channelled back to the water-lapped region of his childhood. Not that the Nile essay is all Proustian nostalgia. Once again, a monolithic response to life is castigated - this time, in the massive ships of the *Aswan Dam*. Cataloguing the "havoc wrought by that hulking barrage at Aswan", Styron shows how - by failing to take into account unique and delicate local balances - it has done colossal damage. Diastrophically, an intricate and highly individual network of relationships has been ruptured by the setting down on it of the giant slab. The resulting chain-reaction has eroded temples, wastefully diverted life-giving silt into the desert, deposited corrosive layers of salt on crops, and - as a result of the peculiar micro-climate generated round Lake Nasser - caused rain to pour in destructive torrents on mud-hut communities. A very concrete instance of the harm that flows from monumental distortion. It is an object lesson that suits Styron perfectly.

*Ploughshares* Volume 8 Number (243pp. Box 259, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139, \$35/£3) is a special issue containing extracts from novels by Al Young (*Seduction by Light*), Rossell Brown (*Civil War*), Jay Gans (*Palmeres*), and Lee McCarty (*Arbitrary Fates*); and the stories "Lily", by T. Alan Broughton, "Nadine", by Joe Ashby Porter, "The Intruders of Sleepless Nights", by Pamela Painter, "The Birds and the Bees", by Sue Miller, "Blood Telling", by Gayle Whittier, "Age", by Bernice Reiter, "The Black Dog", by Bernice Reiter, "Waterloo Garden", by David Low, "Minnie the Moon", by Jack Puddis, and "The Gossamer", by Anne Tibbitts.

## Surviving the happy day

Julian Symons

JOAN GIVNER

Katherine Anne Porter: A Life  
572pp. Cape. £15.  
0 224 02093 5

The best American short story writer of the century? The question mark is necessary in relation to Katherine Anne Porter when one thinks of Hemingway and Faulkner. Bierce and Flannery O'Connor and Eudora Welty, yet it is certainly among this half-dozen that she should be placed. The collected stories make up a volume of little more than five hundred pages, but her achievement was great and varied. She was a Southerner and several stories evoke her Texan origins, yet she is not a Southern writer in the sense that the term is rightly applied to Faulkner and Welty. Her first tales were set in Mexico, where she lived in 1920 at the time of the Obregón regime. She called it afterwards "the most marvelous, spontaneous experience of my life", but on this and other occasions she was a passionately interested spectator rather than a participant, an example, as the critic Ashley Brown has remarked, of a writer who can enter the life of another country without losing her bearings. And indeed, from the time in her late twenties when she realized that the purpose of her life was to be a writer, she never lost her literary bearings.

It may be asked, however, whether those five hundred-odd pages, plus one unsuccessful novel, justify five hundred-odd pages of biography. She would certainly have been more kindly served by a book half the length of Joan Givner's, but the story set down here in unforgetting detail is so extraordinary that one cannot regret its telling, even though the names of a number of Katherine Anne Porter's friends (Peter Taylor, Robert Penn Warren and Eudora Welty among them) are significantly absent from the list of acknowledgments.

The book's principal revelation is that Katherine Anne Porter invented her own history, or, as one might otherwise put it, never told the complete truth about anything connected with her background, and emboldened reality about some of her later life as well. Her family moved from Kentucky to Texas in the 1850s, and she was born in 1890 in the small community of Indian Creek, which has "the character of a new frontier settlement, with some of the families living in sod houses and others in rough log structures". Her mother died before she was two years old, and the event shattered her father Harrison Boone Porter. He gave to the eldest child, Givner, who was seven years old, a picture of her mother on which he had written a lengthy message, saying among other things that with her death "I saw the star of all my earthly hopes go down in an endless darkness". He took the four children to live with his mother in the small town of Kyle. There Katherine Anne spent her childhood, the four children sharing a single bedroom. Her father continued to brood over his dead wife, could not find steady work, and became "hostile, violent and uncontrolled". The children's clothes were old and shabby, and often they were neighbours' cast-offs. Katherine Anne escaped at the age of sixteen, by marriage to a serious conventional young man, a clerk on the railway named John Henry Kootz.

Later she greatly improved this disagreeable humble background, claiming family connections with Daniel Boone, associated herself with every Porter of distinction she could find, heading a genealogical chart with the crest of an ancient Porter family, and showing on it another Porter descended from a knight who had accompanied William the Conqueror to England. Often she went further than this. "Of one thing I am very sure", said a friend who met her several years later. "Katherine Anne came of a very fine family. Her childhood friends in Austin and San Antonio and elsewhere were prominent people." The stories, however, rarely reflect these fantasies. In some the background is romanticized, but several are refreshingly the scenes of her childhood, most notably the short

novel *Noon Wine*, in which the central characters closely resemble her parents.

When she was approaching forty she said that she had had four husbands and thirty-seven lovers, and although she was anticipating her last two marriages (in the fourth, nearly fifty years old, she married a man of twenty-six), there is no particular reason to question her numeracy in relation to the lovers. This makes it the more remarkable that she lived with Kootz ("that filthy little fellow" she later called him) for seven years, during which she apparently spent her time like any other housewife in a small Texas town. She claimed afterwards that the marriage was not consummated, which, as her biographer says, seems unlikely. Joan Givner adds, without giving a source for the information, that during the marriage she discovered herself to be both barren and frigid. After leaving Kootz she did a little work as a film extra, spent some time in a sanatorium where she was treated for tuberculosis, and became a skilled and efficient journalist on a Denver paper. She contracted influenza during the 1918 epidemic, ran a temperature of 105 for nine days, but survived after one day being left behind screens to die. Her father received the news of her illness typically. He made no attempt to come and see her, but asked that her body should be returned for burial beside her mother. She later called the incident crucial to her life, said that she had experienced what "the Greeks call the 'happy day', the happy vision just before death", and that after survival nothing could be the same again. She left Denver, made for New York and Greenwich Village, and then went to Mexico. Her life as a freelance writer had begun. She was thirty years old, and apart from her journalism had published nothing.

There is something missing in the portrait of her given here, a clue to show how the little-educated, neurotic Texas housewife-turned-journalist became the woman who wrote stories which are often romantic in feeling but always calmly classical in tone, and charmed her own generation of American writers with her manners and education. How did she find time to educate herself among the stresses of life that she accepted and even welcomed, while occupied with all those husbands and lovers? But if we learn nothing of what she read and when she read it, her charm and her overwhelming need for love and admiration are excellently shown. She was no more than two inches over five feet, with a good figure, gleaming black hair, and large grey eyes. She talked always with great animation (Edmund Wilson called her conversation mesmerizing), used theatrical gestures to emphasize points, had an impeccable dress sense and spent all her money on clothes. She fell in love almost always with men likely to cause her grief, homosexuals, happily married men looking for a casual affair, and as she grew older with men much younger than herself. She lived to the age of ninety, and in her eighties was still having romantic involvements with young men. Her biographer thinks that "every new love affair held the promise of alleviating her sense of sexual failure", but it would seem that sex was less important to her than the constant need to be loved, admired, praised, cosseted.

The impression that emerges is of a woman of great intelligence, but hardly to be called highly principled. Her finest stories, which include "Flowering Judas", "That Tree", with its brilliant creation of a man with artistic feelings who just lacks talent, *Noon Wine* and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider", are completely original works. There is simply nothing else like them in the modern short story. They justify her statement of belief made at the height of the Second World War, in a foreword to a collection of her stories: "The arts do live continuously, and they live literally by faith; their names and their shapes and their uses and their meanings survive through the interruption, dishonouring, neglect, their outlive governments and creeds and the societies, even the civilizations that produced them."

assignment in Ann Arbor she "looked like a peacock that had fluttered down in a barnyard" to one student. Her class on modern poetry turned into a historical survey, and she dismissed famous prose contemporaries with a few scathing words, calling Faulkner's *Sansbury* a truly scandalous book, and becoming "almost strident in her abuse of Evelyn Waugh". Many students idolized her and became known as her "fervents", their fervency not lessened because in tutorials she tended not to discuss their writing but to talk about her husbands. "If one lives long enough everything will come", she said, and in her mid-seventies she became a best-seller with *The Ship of Fools*, a novel at the time much, but mistakenly, praised, in which her feelings for symbolism ran disastrously free.

It is a prime merit of this biography that it leads us back into the stories, showing how much the author drew on childhood experience and her life in Mexico, where she made a second stay of several months at the end of the 1920s. The short pieces in "The Old Order" are traced back to childhood stays in West Texas. The grandmother's death in "The Journey" (after saying how well she felt in the mountain air she "dropped dead over the doorkill") exactly parallels that of the author's own Aunt Cat, and most of the characters in this sequence and in "Old Mortality" are based on close or distant members of her family. The Mexican stories are also traced back to their sources, the fat guitar-playing revolutionary Braggioni in "Flowering Judas" having his counterpart in a figure who similarly pestered a friend, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider", which so astonishingly conveys the real yet delicious quality of a world seen by somebody in a high fever, was based on the time in Denver when she almost died.

The reflection Joan Givner's book chiefly prompts is wonder at the way in which such a disordered, tempestuous, hard-drinking, often frustrated life (frustrated in spite of the thirty-seven lovers), produced so assured and serene an art. Edmund Wilson, in a piece otherwise uncharacteristically indecisive, remarked truly that she excluded her personality from her work, adding that "she writes English of a purity and precision almost unique in contemporary American fiction". The feeling that comes through most clearly, especially in the stories that move outside Texas, is the sense of a collapsing civilization. Her weakness, directly suggested, was for symbolism used to express this feeling too directly.

Yet even the symbolism can be successfully used, as in conveying Laura's feeling of guilt about the young man's death in "Flowering Judas", and everywhere are turns of phrase that show the truth of Wilson's remark about the quality of her writing. In her story "Miranda" Miranda regards marriage as "an illness that she might one day hope to recover from"; a Pole in "The Learning Tower" tells the innocently guilty young American visitor, "If you set yourself up as a benefactor, you must expect to be hated"; the professional revolutionist Braggioni "has the malice, the cleverness, the wickedness, the sharpness of wit, the hardness of heart, stipulated for loving the world profitably". Beside the line-by-line excellence of her prose, the pains she took in turning a phrase and shaping a sentence, went a tact in adapting reality to the needs of art. She never hardly wrote too highly principled a sentence, which include "Flowering Judas", "That Tree", with its brilliant creation of a man with artistic feelings who just lacks talent, *Noon Wine* and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider", are completely original works. There is simply nothing else like them in the modern short story. They justify her statement of belief made at the height of the Second World War, in a foreword to a collection of her stories: "The arts do live continuously, and they live literally by faith; their names and their shapes and their uses and their meanings survive through the interruption, dishonouring, neglect, their outlive governments and creeds and the societies, even the civilizations that produced them."

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# Per ardua ad astra

James Lighthill

CLAYTON R. KOPPEL

JPL and the American Space Program: A History of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory  
299pp. Yale University Press. £16.95.  
0 300 02408 8

Earth accompanied by its single Moon is dwarfed by the solar system's two greatest planets, Jupiter and Saturn; moons with a diameter (and number of moons) over nine times as large. The past four years have transformed our knowledge of these two huge bodies which revolve about our common Sun at distances from five to ten times that of the Earth's; and it has not been merely specialists but the interested public in general that have revelled in the close-up colour pictures of Saturn, with its rings and its eccentrically shaped satellites, or of Jupiter and the remarkable eddies of its atmosphere around the Great Red Spot. Those pictures were transmitted, of course, by the Voyager spacecraft whose achievements in unmanned planetary exploration have to be regarded (however paradoxically) as a major human triumph.

Although teamwork was of the essence in this, as in so many such triumphs, particular individuals played vital roles. Deeply original creative contributions were needed from individual engineers and scientists. In addition, some particularly inspired leadership was called for: both to build up outstanding teams combining all the necessary practical knowledge and skills and experience with creative originality and efficient management in an atmosphere of confidence and cooperation; and to find ways of overcoming the grave imperfections of communication that bedevil attempts at concerted action between the engineering and the political spheres.

Against this background it is a matter of real interest when a historian such as Clayton Koppel, with a clear narrative style, seeks to trace from its earliest beginnings (in 1936) the story of the particular organization (known as JPL) mainly responsible for Voyager's recent triumph. Such a story, indicating details of technological innovation to only a perfunctory extent, but concentrating more on the problems of leadership, direction, teambuilding and the

interface between politics and engineering, proves to be both exciting and instructive.

One of the most outstanding universities of the United States is that designated (a little misleadingly, for such a wide-ranging institution) as the California Institute of Technology, and abbreviated as CIT or Caltech. It is especially interesting that an organization like JPL with so many important successes in space missions to its credit, interspersed to be sure with failures but culminating in the Voyager triumph, should have developed initially as a Caltech activity; and that later, however separate it became in its fundamental character, there continued to be substantial links (in a succession of different forms, but always productive of mutual benefits) between JPL and Caltech. Admittedly, those links became weaker and weaker, making the organization's official description (since 1944) as the Jet Propulsion Laboratory of the California Institute of Technology increasingly misleading; but the residual links remain interesting because they survived and can be seen in retrospect as having been helpful in several different ways.

One well-known Laboratory within CIT which was already flourishing in the early 1930s, and which has remained firmly within CIT ever since and continued to flourish, was the Guggenheim Aeronautical Laboratory, soon to become universally known as GALCIT. The opportunities in aeronautical education and research had, in short, been enthusiastically embraced by Caltech; and GALCIT was proving most successful under the admirable direction of Clark Millikan.

But it was the extraordinary combination of gifts for scientific creativity and leadership exhibited by the great Theodore von Kármán, who joined GALCIT after being forced to leave Hitler's Germany, which stimulated that Laboratory to add on so effectively, from 1936 onwards, a completely new line of activity: rocket development. The potential application which von Kármán emphasized in order to obtain funds for that work in its early stages was to achieve quicker, shorter takeoffs for military aircraft through the assistance of booster rockets; and it is a clear indication of the team's success in pioneering a radically new technology (helped after Pearl Harbor by the general military urgency) that this goal was reached in 1942 and that the devices were being widely used in the Pacific by the following year.

The sensitivity of von Kármán in public relations, however, made him decide never to use the potentially disturbing word "rocket" in dealing with the world outside his Laboratory.

This is why the new device was called JATO (Jet Assisted Take Off); and why, by 1944, the whole organization developing rockets under von Kármán's leadership was named Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Nowadays we tend to confine our use of the term Jet Propulsion to engines that take in atmospheric air at the front, and use it to oxidize (to burn) fuel so as to generate the energy of a propulsive jet. However, such a jet is also generated by a rocket; that is, by a device which carries on board its own oxidizing agent as well as its own fuel; and this property was, of course, recognized by von Kármán and his colleagues at a very early stage as making rockets potentially able to operate outside the Earth's atmosphere.

Soon, the team had solved the basic problems of rockets using solid charges, as in JATO, and of rockets carrying on board separate tanks of liquid fuel and a liquid oxidant (in fact, red fuming nitric acid), as in various guided-missile projects under the generic name of Corporal. In the meantime, two similar developments of big solid-propellant and liquid-propellant rockets were being simultaneously made elsewhere: by the brilliant American R. S. Goddard, whose rather nineteenth-century "pioneering" approach was to prove incapable of bringing about a development on the scale required; and by the strong German team under the outstanding leadership of Werner von Braun, which was destined to produce the V2.

In 1940, Caltech had felt pleasantly relieved when von Kármán moved his noisy and hazardous rocket experiments to a new site six miles from the campus; and it was the facility on this site that became designated in 1944 as the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, to be administered by the Institute (for a consideration, which ever after remained a useful component of Caltech's finances) on behalf of the US Army Ordnance Corps. A dynamic new member, William Pickering, joined the staff in that year; very fortunately, as he was to provide the renewed leadership for JPL when von Kármán, having established the essential scientific basis and engineering practice of rocketry, ceased his active involvement with the Laboratory.

The immediate postwar years, when the Laboratory was struggling with the development of usefully large surface-to-surface guided missiles, including a completely new liquid-propelled Corporal alongside a solid-propelled Sergeant, were years of difficulty and uncertainty in military policy. In 1944, however, the Soviet Union's successful detonation of an atomic bomb galvanized the US military into a greatly increased emphasis on advanced defence projects, including

Corporal and Sergeant. By 1953 that had generated powerful US Army pressure to put JPL under military control.

This led to the first of a long series of complex struggles in which the prestige of Caltech and the strong will of Lee Du Bridge (its President from 1946 to 1969) were ultimately to prove decisive in maintaining a substantive Caltech link for JPL, whose civilian control gave it a strong scientific and engineering leadership under Pickering, who was Director of the Laboratory from 1954 to 1976. The development of Corporal and, especially Sergeant began to go much better; while, at the same time, Pickering's interest in the ultimate possibility of space projects was continually growing.

Then, once again, the whole "establishment" attitude in the United States was completely transformed by an event in the Soviet Union: the October 1957 launch of the Earth's first artificial satellite, Sputnik. There was suddenly an immense urgency behind American spacecraft developments. Among many remarkable results of that urgency, the US's two strongest rocket teams (that under Pickering in California and that under JPL's old rival, von Braun, now installed in Alabama) accepted the challenge of jointly engineering a US satellite launch in the minimum possible time; leading by the end of January 1958 to the launching of Explorer I, the Earth's second artificial satellite.

The momentum behind American space initiatives was to continue, stimulated by more Russian "firsts": while, later in 1958, NASA was formed. Soon afterwards, with the agreement of all concerned, NASA took over all responsibility for JPL (including the provision of the financial consideration due to Caltech for the benefits of having the Laboratory under the general administrative umbrella of such a prestigious university institution). A second Explorer launch proceeded to discover what we now call the Van Allen Belts surrounding the Earth, with their unexpectedly dense population of energetic particles.

Newer space projects on which the Laboratory now embarked included some which were destined for disaster; either through errors of "design philosophy" — for example, through a concentration on designs that would inevitably fail unless every single one of an extremely long series of consecutive automatic operations was carried out precisely (as in Ranger); or, alternatively, through the Laboratory's failure to secure continued political backing (as in Vega). But these events, however depressing or frustrating, were building up an invaluable store of experience.

Another spacecraft project, Mariner, was considerably more successful from the outset. Mariner 2 was launched in August 1962 and successfully escaped from the Earth's gravitational field, achieving a safely close to Venus four months later. There was a further excellent series of such flybys, including one of Mars in 1964, and in 1973 Mariner uncovered a most significant body of new information about the solar system's innermost planet, Mercury.

The major scientific benefits of unmanned planetary exploration (and its cost-effectiveness) had been threatened, however, by President Kennedy's pledge, in May 1961, to place a man on the Moon. This policy was to force JPL to divert its effort into the Surveyor project, aimed at an unmanned "soft landing" on the Moon's surface to test its load-bearing quality. Later, the escalating cost of Apollo forced cutbacks in the funding of such ancillary projects and Surveyor was delayed. When, finally, a successful soft landing in May 1966 sent back excellent pictures of the moon's surface and established its good load-bearing quality, the information was too late to influence the landing-carrier design for Apollo, which was already "frozen". Nevertheless, another four soft landings giving precious lunar information were made by Surveyor.

In the meantime, NASA had made massive propaganda in favour of a vast \$2-billion project aimed at a so-called "Grand Tour" expedition to be called Voyager, that would take in all of the outer planets. Meticulous studies of these grandiose proposals by JPL, assisted by scientists in Caltech proper, indicated many gravely unsatisfactory features, defects which, along with the pressure of Apollo's escalating demands, combined to bring about the cancellation of the original "Voyager" project.

It was several years later, in 1975, that JPL was able at last to build upon these extensive studies of the earlier project, and upon all of its hard-won experience in spacecraft engineering and politics, and to produce at last a quite new Voyager scheme, "re-vamped" (in Koppel's phrase) to make it a cost-effective scientific mission. William Pickering retired in 1976, but the Voyager development was by then well on its way to the extraordinary achievements of 1979 and 1980 in Jupiter and Saturn exploration.

Nothing can ever detract from those triumphs. Yet it seems astonishing that in the past two years NASA has once again given up practically all of its former cost-effective activity in meticulously instrumented planetary exploration in favour of an absorbing, and quantity unbecomingly absorbing with the unwieldy Space Shuttle.

THEODORE H. WHITE

America in Search of Itself: The Making of the President 1956-1980  
465pp. Cape. £10.95.  
0 224 02942 8

Theodore H. White's anguished re-assessment of the past quarter-century of American politics also includes an acknowledgment of what has been wrong all along with his political reporting. A discerning connoisseur of American regional differences, a deft portraitist of political personalities, and a master of anecdote and detail, White revolutionized the whole concept of presidential campaign reporting with *The Making of the President 1960*, and his chronicles of subsequent campaigns have had no rivals in popularity. Yet he now realizes that in recounting the political dramas of the 1960s and their consequences in the 1970s he made the mistake of ignoring the ferment of ideas.

Thus when he announces on the first page of *America in Search of Itself* that by 1980 public affairs in the United States had gone off the track, that there was no longer any sense of coherence in government, he is not merely introducing an external description of the sort he has given us so many times before. At the heart of the upheaval of the 1960s, he goes on to say, lay the "liberal idea" that the duty of government was to conceive programmes and fund them so that whatever was accepted as right and just, at home or abroad, would come to pass, whatever the cost, whatever the contradictions between good intentions and prevailing reality. In making that statement White signals not only his personal disenchantment with liberal politics, but a determination to write about it in a different way. For the most part his plans for the book are brilliantly carried out.

There were three ideas, White believes, that destabilized American life and the use of its power in the two decades before Reagan's victory in 1980. In the first instance, the age-old American vision of equality and justice was translated into the Democratic party's rabble-rousing slogans of "participation and entry". All groups were to be included in the public process, the public welfare, and the public service. As soon as a group was identified, it would be blessed with education, benefits, and entitlements. The pursuit of "participation and entry" altered all political realities. White argues, for it led to the breaking down of American communities by age and sex, by colour and race.

Instead of opening up American life, liberalism's new slogans splintered it. Trade unions and great industries alike were thrown into disarray as promotions, training rights, and seniority rights fell under federal jurisdiction, in a series of court decisions based on race. In Detroit, a white woman was fired from her job with the city's housing commission simply because she was white. At Brown University, in Providence, Rhode Island, a budgetary squeeze caused a white man to be dismissed as associate chaplain, but a white woman and a black man in similar positions were retained; the retentions stemmed from the university's desire not to incur the displeasure of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. In the State of New York, new rules governing the selection of delegates to the Democratic party's national conventions mandated that all delegates be 19 per cent black, 50 per cent women, and 7.2 per cent Hispanic.

So the new American system recognized privilege according to race or minority — and the benevolent liberals who dreamed up the system had a difficult time in defining their terms. What, for instance, was a Hispanic? Hispanics were included in several federal laws simply as "minorities". Yet sometimes they were defined, bureaucratically, as "Spanish-speaking" or as people with "Hispanic surnames". Backed up as he always has been by his comprehensive acquaintance with the complex, American scene, White is, devastatingly effective in exposing the unsatisfactoriness of these formulations. In Miami, huge numbers of Hispanics are upper-level, middle-class Cubans. In New York, most Hispanics are Puerto Ricans and Dominicans on the lowest rung of the economic ladder. In the Southwest, Hispanics are generally blue-collar or "stoop-labour" Mexican-Americans, many of them legal residents, many of them not. Nearly all the Hispanic communities in the United States, moreover, include both blacks and whites, while in the Southwest a difference is recognized between the "Indios" and the "Spanish".

The second of the dangerous ideas embraced by the liberal consensus at the beginning of the 60s was the assumption of limitless American abundance. In the historian David Potter's phrase, Americans were a "people of plenty". From its bottomless cornucopia, the United States could pluck modern steel mills and install them as an act of generosity in post-war Europe and Japan; it could urge Europe and Japan to share in the American marketplace, and to draw upon America's technology and resources. Meanwhile on the home front, American abundance could underwrite rewards and entitlements for every group that could be defined as having a claim, from the blacks and Hispanics to Asian refugees and American Indians, from the environmentalists to the educators, from the sugar growers of Colorado and Puerto Rico to the tobacco growers of North Carolina and the fishermen of Massachusetts and Maine. Who in abundant America would be so callous as to quibble about the cost to American cities of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which denied urban transit-systems federal funds unless they provided ramps, wheelchair lifts and other aids for the handicapped? Who could object to scholarship loans to college students? Or to rehabilitation programmes for narcotic addicts? Or to hospital benefits for unwed mothers?

Liberalism set out to free everyone, White observes, and created a nation of dependents instead. The statistics he cites lend substance to that irony. By 1980, 36 million Americans received monthly Social Security cheques; 22 million drew Medicaid benefits; 26 million more Medicare; 18 million supplemented their budgets with food stamps; 15 million received veterans' benefits; 27 million children were fed by school lunch programmes; 11 million citizens received general welfare payments; 11 million qualified for support from Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The sweep of such programmes was immense, but their costs were never estimated with precision. In 1956, the Congress passed a disability insurance amendment to Social Security, estimating it would rise in cost to \$860 million by 1980. But in 1980 it cost more than \$15 billion a year. In 1977, it was estimated that an act making farmers eligible for disaster loans would cost \$20 million a year; it turned out to be \$1.4 billion.

To the political constituencies of the 1970s that were sustained by this largesse, it did not matter in the slightest that the American economy was now being simultaneously battered by competition from abroad and inflation at home. Whatever problems the nation was having, these constituencies insisted, America had an obligation — a moral obligation — to go on "hiking" the size of its payments to them, in a sequence without end.

The third of the great ideas that transformed America in the 60s stemmed from the advent of television, which White calls "the most unsettling event in Western history since the invention of printing". What television did in America was to fuse the sprawling federal Union into a single audience. The nationalization of public opinion had begun in the mid-nineteenth century with the invention of the telegraph and had been carried forward in the course of the next century by the mass media. But it was television that completed the nationalization process, and by so doing profoundly affected the conduct of American politics.

Kenneth S. Lynn

By 1980, television had saturated the culture of the United States. Eighty million American homes contained one or more television sets. In order to provide continuous political entertainment to this stupendous audience, candidates who sought the presidential nomination of their party entered primary contests in more and more states, until running for president degenerated into a squalid exercise that exhausted the candidates and robbed them of their dignity. At the same time, the desire not to offend the watchers in video land led political party managers to clamp down on displays of old-fashioned political muscle, such as the brutal humiliation to which Nelson Rockefeller was subjected in San Francisco in 1964 by the Goldwater-controlled Republican convention, and to replace them with carefully staged projections of an oftentimes factitious harmony.

Because the mass market for political news held out the promise of enormous profits to its most popular suppliers, the great media organizations flung unprecedented numbers of troops into the battle for the nation's troops. In 1956, the presidential primary in New Hampshire was covered by seven reporters, one of

whom was Teddy White. In 1980, the three major television networks sent approximately 450 reporters and technicians into the little state; the *New York Times* at one point had nine correspondents on the scene; and a horde of almost half a thousand reporters covered the primary for other newspapers around the country.

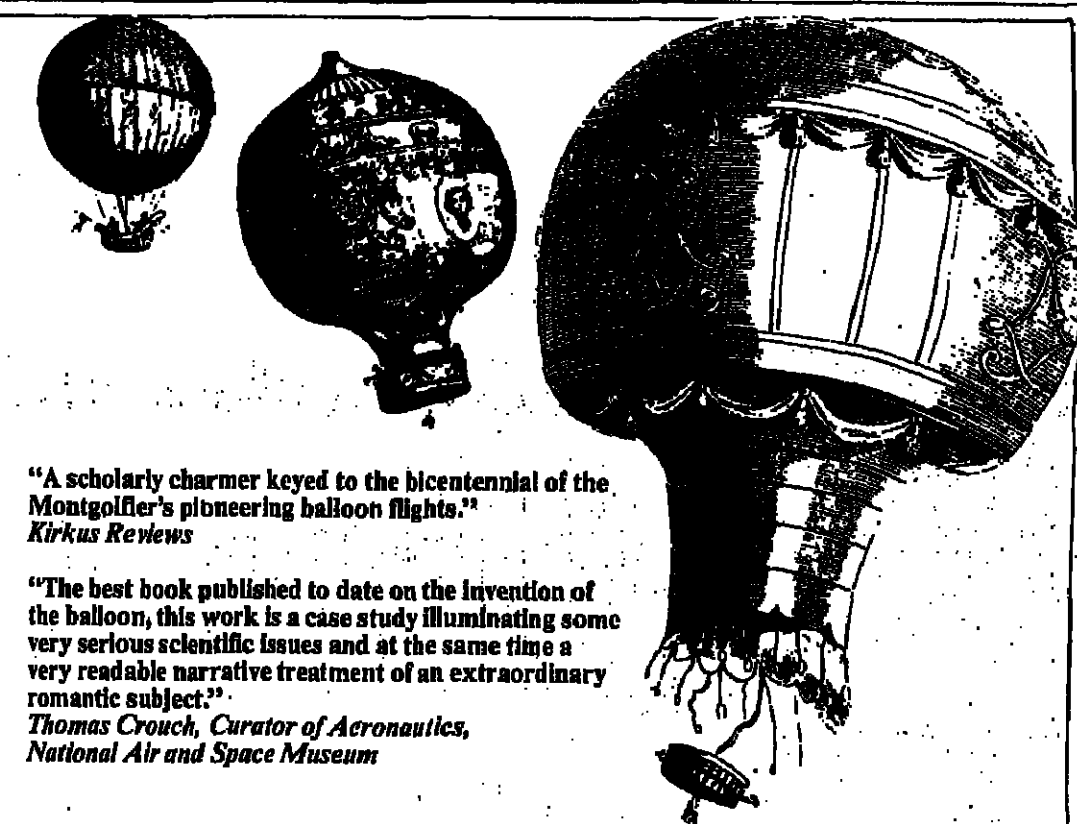
The interpretations that newspaper reporters placed upon the events they reported; the stories that newspaper editors chose to run; the images upon which television cameramen elected to fix their lenses; the shots that the television engineers at network headquarters decided to splice together — all these decisions added up to a breathtaking amount of influence on the American mind. Has that influence been exercised in a responsible manner? Unfortunately, the author of *America in Search of Itself* has not been equal to the task of answering that question.

At the outset of his book White does say that the prevailing liberalism of the past two decades has been guided by a "liberal dominance" in the Congress, in academia, in the great foundations and in the media. But the particulars of how reporters and editors have systematically tailored the news to

serve liberal ends are not spelt out. In his acknowledgments White even takes the bite out of his opening statement about liberal bias by affirming that "the quality of American political reporting has improved almost unbelievably in the past twenty-five years".

White concludes his book with the hope that in the 1980s America will finally be released from "the web of federal control". The conclusion does not remind us, though, that the awesome power of political reporting remains largely in the hands of men and women who wish to see the web of federal control drawn more tightly than ever around the United States.

In *The Current Crisis in American Politics* (330pp. Oxford University Press. £22.50. 0 19 503219 5), Walter Dean Burnham has gathered eight papers written between 1964 and 1980, with an introduction and final chapter on President Reagan's rise to power. Other essays discuss the dynamic nature of American politics, voting research and the limits on democratic participation, with particular reference to congressional elections and the 1976 presidential election.



"A scholarly charmer keyed to the bicentennial of the Montgolfier's pioneering balloon flights." *Kirkus Reviews*

"The best book published to date on the invention of the balloon, this work is a case study illuminating some very serious scientific issues and at the same time a very readable narrative treatment of an extraordinary romantic subject." *Thomas Crouch, Curator of Aeronautics, National Air and Space Museum*

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Charles Coulston Gillispie

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## The azimuths of Asimov

W. H. McCrea

ISAAC ASIMOV

Exploring the Earth and the Cosmos: The Growth and Future of Human Knowledge  
339pp. Allen Lane. £8.95.  
0 7139 1371 4

This is a book that tells all about everything — or nearly so. Its four sections are about the horizons of space, of time, of matter and of energy; in the sense of the progressive enlargement of the horizons of human knowledge in these domains.

Of these, the first and longest is a history of travel over the Earth's surface by land and by water, of travel above and below the surface, then of manned and unmanned journeys into space, followed by an account of the astronomy of the Solar System, and something about the rest of the astronomical Universe. The section ends with a few pages of discussion of the possibility of space settlements, and of colonization by mankind of distant parts of the Universe — in the distant future.

This led one to expect the remaining sections to go on to further such discussions of possible future developments. Indeed, the book's subtitle is "The growth and future of human knowledge". However, these sections deal with the past and current growth of knowledge in the stated fields, without attempting to look into the future. The one on time goes from ancient time-keeping, through the evolution of the Solar System, to a survey of modern cosmology; that on matter from the largest to the smallest bodies of animate, and of inanimate, matter. That on energy discusses the extremes of temperature in the cosmos, and of luminosity of astronomical bodies from the faintest stars to the brightest quasars.

Most of the text consists of factual information. At the least provocation, Asimov turns encyclopedic, whether about the seventeenth-century exploration of North America, the numbering of years from the fourth century BC, the speeds of living things, or the rest of it. It is a very instructive and entertaining book, and also an inspiring — albeit a little dated — Asimov does not ask us to follow, much scientific reasoning. He briefly

describes some speculative theories, rarely expressing views of his own and then only with due caution.

So far as Asimov is able to take the science concerned, in the style of treatment he has adopted, the book is generally reliable. Of course, some elements of over-simplification are unavoidable. For one thing, his choice of an individual whose work is to be quoted in any context is rather arbitrary. As an extreme example, in writing about the formation of the Solar System, he says, "Finally in 1944 . . ." and proceeds to describe ideas put forward forty years ago. There is still no agreed solution to the problem, but a tremendous amount of work has been done on it throughout that time.

Again, Asimov uses the term energy, in his last section and in statements about magnetic fields, in a rather colloquial manner; not as a physicist would use it. One must mention, too, that the Irish physicist G. Johnstone Stoney (1826-1911) is usually credited with having introduced the term electron, not H. A. Lorentz (1853-1928) as Asimov states.

Asimov's style is never dull, and phrases like "a blizzard that was the final straw" are startlingly potent, as well as the occasional colourful detail in the more encyclopedic passages, contribute to its liveliness. There is, however, an obvious lack. Much of the information could be conveyed more clearly, concisely and exactly with the use of tables, maps, diagrams and graphs, and with the help of some illustrations such as the pictures from the space missions to Jupiter and Saturn, which are in fact described, but not shown. But these all take time to prepare. The dust-jacket informs us that in some forty years Isaac Asimov has published an almost incredible 500 books; at that rate of output it would be physically almost impossible to equip so many books in this way. One expanding horizon in the world today must be that of Asimov additions. They will enjoy this book with or without illustrations — and on the evidence just quoted it must be already far from Asimov's latest.

Rupert Sheldrake's *A New Science of Life* has recently been published in paperback (236pp. Granada. 21.5p. 0 386 08418 5). Written on a Chittenden ashram in South India, the book has provoked admiration and fury. Asimov called it "immensely challenging and stimulating". *Nature* voted it "the best candidate for burning there has been for many years".

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## The way of disobedience

John Sturrock

NATHALIE SARRAUTE

Enfance  
257pp. Paris: Gallimard. 75fr.  
0 0702 5979 X

Nathalie Sarraute has waited until her eighties to construct this teasingly oblique account of her childhood. She is a novelist who has shown almost nothing of her self directly in her novels; here she shows something, but less than all, for the book is art, not brash revelation. Mme Sarraute writes autobiography as she has written her fiction, from on high, looking coolly down on her child-self and on those hidden, seismic movements within it seventy years ago which made her what she has since been.

The form of *Enfance* is ironic and compelling, for Sarraute was never one to go lazily down the ruts worn by her predecessors; this autobiography is differently made from any before it. It is a dialogue, in which the autobiographer is joined by a second presence who carries out all manner of duties. Sarraute's other voice is by turns sceptical, supportive, cautionary, forensically probing (a reminder that she was once a barrister). Its effect is to undermine for good the normally assertive voice of the autobiographer herself, who is unable to lay down the law as to how it was with her as a child without being doubted or questioned as to her accuracy. Mme Sarraute has brought her very acute writer's conscience with her into her book, and constantly owns up to the tricks she is playing on the past by thus writing it, as well as warning herself against the ruinous facility which tempts all autobiographers as the memories begin to come.

It is the very cheapness and sentimentality of the genre which give her healthy pause. She wriggles in candid embarrassment at the knowledge that she is setting out to "évoquer les souvenirs d'enfance". This is the cliché she must face up to and reanimate, as she has reanimated so many long expired clichés in her novels. She is also a little thrown by the realization that in writing *Enfance* she has to deal with the already known, whereas when she writes fiction she does so uncertain of where she is going

or what she will discover. Her salvation, therefore, is to assimilate this autobiographical work to the fictional ones, to write it in a form which makes everything appear to be spoken, and never for a moment to allow her memories to get loose from her, who is in the act of remembering them. Sarraute moves her past explicitly into the present, she does not accede to the autobiographical fantasy that in recalling the past one is rejoining it. She does not pretend that she has got those memories right in every detail, for they have been dressed up by her mature, writing self, and analysed to see what it might be about them that has caused these memories, above all, to push themselves forward as she writes.

*Enfance* is not a story of Mme Sarraute's early years, but a broken sequence of scenes or episodes, set a few in her native Russia but mainly in France. Each one is simply, often graphically drawn, and subtly observant of Sarraute herself, of her father, of her mother and of her stepmother. In their drily inquisitive style, these are "tropisms", a record of slight but meaningful moments in a child's life when she is to be seen turning towards or away from (mostly away from) those with whom she lives. The record is rather a sad one, but it is not conveyed with sadness; Sarraute gazes at her childhood, she does not relive it, and her wonderfully even,

shapely sentences make for our delight, more than for our sympathy. Sarraute's childhood as recalled is like her fiction in being conditioned by certain phrases heard or overheard. The first memory set down in *Enfance* is of a sentence spoken to her in German by her nanny when she was on holiday in Switzerland with her father: "Nein, das ist du nicht". This proscription echoes, it may be, the one Sarraute has now flouted by actually starting on the book; and it brings in a theme of disobedience, because her nanny's words went unheeded. It brings in a deeper theme too, of exile. The young Nathalie is away from Russia, away from her mother, away from her own language. *Enfance* may not be a narrative but in the end retraces her initiation, first into this triple absence and then into an emotional independence. She grows out of Russia and into Paris; out of her mother and into herself; out of Russian and into French. Her disobedience to her German nanny proves a fruitful one; she has been told not to cut up the silk upholstery of a settee in the hotel-room, but she takes her scissors and cuts it just the same, so launching herself, it might be said, on a splendid career of self-vandalism, as a novelist it is impossible to smooth and without blemish; now there comes to her from nowhere the cruel thought that her mother has "une peau de singe". Her entirely conventional "love" for her mother is dead; she has passed through an ultimate disobedience and laid

waste the false unity of her family romance. She soon knows that her mother cares little or nothing for her, that her father is kind, perhaps unhappy, but distant, that her stepmother, who is only fifteen years older than herself, is snobbish and favours her own newborn daughter against her stepdaughter. The discoveries which the child comes to in *Enfance* are so many lessons in pessimism respecting human sincerity.

The book contains few dates, but it ends around 1914, with Nathalie catching the train in order to go for the very first time to the Lycée Fénelon. There the autobiographer stops, pleading the loss of all desire to go on. In fact her work is done: her childhood is complete, and extraordinarily well caught by a technique which is as precise as it is unassuming. At the age of eight, Mme Sarraute was given the novels of Mayne Reid by her father. She dreaded the endless descriptions in them, of the endless prairies, and looked longingly ahead to the "titres libérateurs" which meant that the characters were about to start talking. Mme Sarraute's own writing has been all "titres libérateurs", all conversation and no prairies. To have used this same device in *Enfance* was a risk, but it works wonderfully well. This is autobiography scrupulously written for the eavesdropping ear, and without equal that I can think of in the moving, absorbing balance it strikes between the confidential and the formal.

## From infatuation to indifference

Patrick Pollard

RICHARD TEDESCHI (Editor and Translator)

Selected Letters of André Gide and Dorothy Bussy  
316pp. Oxford University Press.  
£17.50.  
0 19 212224 X

The letters exchanged between Gide and such prominent English literary figures as Arnold Bennett, Edmund Gosse and Lord Alfred Douglas have already been published. Now following the full three-volume French edition of the letters of Gide and Dorothy Bussy, Richard Tedeschi has provided a judiciously large selection in English which has the advantage of highlighting what is arguably one of the most important aspects of this dialogue, namely a love whose name Dorothy Bussy dared only on occasion utter. The reader might have expected more light to be shed on the contacts a notable French writer established with Roger Fry, Lytton Strachey, Lady Ottoline Morrell and the Bloomsbury Group in general, but the whole correspondence is more a private than a literary conversation. Living in and near Nice for much of each year, Dorothy Bussy was not quite at the centre of things, though her tastes were

wide-ranging and she took care to be properly involved in family affairs.

Some letters clearly take the form of confessions, where the act of writing about her love brought her a measure of consolation; but did such admissions alarm or disconcert Gide? In a paradoxical way, the editor argues, it was Gide who was the victim: his was the problem of dealing with an importunate but sensitive close friend who was easily hurt. In the end the accusation of "rivalry" is made more than once as Gide, either deliberately or thoughtlessly, makes remarks which hurt her. With what insight did she write in 1930: "I believe, I believe, oh, with a transport of joy that you like me to love you", and in 1942: "I thought the only kind thing I could do for you was to keep away, to pretend indifference, to achieve indifference, since that I thought was what you wanted [...]. He shall not suffer pity or remorse for me." Even in 1921, three years after they had first met, she wrote: "The freedom of your heart I feel you let me into places where no one else may go. I may wonder where I please with impunity." But here, surely, is the delicate enthusiasm born of her passion. In 1939 Dorothy Bussy read the scarcely concealed account of her behaviour in the latest section of Gide's *Journal*. Here she found, in cold print, the wounding description of her

infatuation she had previously requested Gide not to publish. Was it cruelty? Oversight? Indifference? Zeal for the truth? This is what the editor perhaps has in mind when he says that Gide knew how to defend himself.

It would be wrong to give the impression that Gide and Dorothy Bussy discussed nothing but her love. There is also Gide's visit to Oxford to receive his honorary degree, together with opinions on the protocol involved and his delicious telegram: "Friend Maurice to be enthroned [...]. I fear awkwardly ironic appearance other slar ceremony." There is the death of Dorothy's dearest brother, Lytton, and the subsequent death of Carrington. As one expects from Gide's excellent translator, there are many succinct remarks on the art and duty of translating: "With you when a word is altered, when the order is disarranged by a hair's breadth, the whole spirit of the thing seems to vanish. And yet the unhappy translator must alter words and disarrange order" (1937). This, after all, is exactly the problem posed by the different structures of each language. To Dorothy Bussy's delight Florio encapsulated the best of the golden era of translation with his Elizabethan Montaigne.

Now that these letters are printed in

English, another revelation is that of Dorothy Bussy's style. Less formal than when she was writing her careful miniature *Olivia*, and more personal than when translating, she describes her mood with rapid phrases and images of striking sharpness. "Just drop this into that convenient and capacious waste paper basket of oblivion and ignoring that you always keep so handy beside you" (1918); and again: "You talked about *Thérèse* [...]. There's a pinch of ash saved (for me) from the embers of the past" (1944). It is a pity to find a few errors in an otherwise attractively produced volume, but Dorothy Bussy would not have approved of Joseph Fielding (in the index), nor the Gresset Press.

Is one called upon to judge the actors in a dialogue such as this? Even after reading the Gallinard edition one is left perplexed: the editor discerns great dignity in a delicate situation, but I am not sure that "understanding" would not have been a more suitable word than "dignity". There is too much ambivalence on her side, too much constantly aware of the necessary role of confident Dorothy Bussy played for Gide from 1918 to the end of his life. Perhaps fascination is the reaction most readily evoked in the mind of the reader — but, as the editor says, each must judge for himself.

## The imperial impact

D. K. Fieldhouse

DEBARMA KUMAR with MEGHNA DESAI (Editors)

The Cambridge Economic History of India: Volume Two, c 1757-c 1970  
1073pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£60.  
0 521 22802 6

Cambridge invented the collective history (*The Cambridge Modern History*) in the later nineteenth century on the principle that no one person could master all aspects of a given period; and Cambridge is still acting on it. But this second volume of *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, along with the later volumes in *The Cambridge History of India*, may well be among the last of the genre, for the *New Cambridge History of India* will be in many relatively short volumes, each by a different author. As always, with so large and expensive a book, one is bound to ask whether any useful purpose is served by binding together fourteen chapters (three of them consisting of two or more sections by different writers), several the length of a normal monograph, by twenty authors, some of whom write sections of chapters, others more than one section or chapter, two sharing a section between them.

The defects of the model are compounded here by the excessive indulgence of the editors: some sections or chapters are disproportionately long for a work of this kind, notably the ninety pages of B. Chaudhuri's section on "Agrarian Relations in Eastern India" before about 1857, much of which is available in his *Growth of Commercial Agriculture in Bengal 1757-1900*. Such detailed treatment in a collective work could only be justified if it represented new and original research. The editors claim that "some of the authors did not merely survey the field but undertook original work as part of their brief" and this may well be true, though the University Press's refusal to allow full footnoting or a proper bibliography makes it difficult to be sure. But for the most part these chapters follow the pattern of almost all works of this kind: they survey and pull together the existing knowledge to provide a reasonably comprehensive overview of the state of the subject at the time of publication, though the book has taken so long to produce, that in fact the picture it gives is more typical of the early 1970s than of the early 1980s.

Is one called upon to judge the actors in a dialogue such as this? Even after reading the Gallinard edition one is left perplexed: the editor discerns great dignity in a delicate situation, but I am not sure that "understanding" would not have been a more suitable word than "dignity". There is too much ambivalence on her side, too much constantly aware of the necessary role of confident Dorothy Bussy played for Gide from 1918 to the end of his life. Perhaps fascination is the reaction most readily evoked in the mind of the reader — but, as the editor says, each must judge for himself.

agricultural economy. Among the most important determinants of the economic performance of an agrarian economy are demographic growth and agricultural technology. It is true that a chapter is devoted to the first of these and several sections to the second. But there is little attempt to integrate these considerations into the chapters on the regions, so that the internal dynamics of the Indian economy during the colonial period remain obscure. The external dimension is treated more fully, but, as I shall suggest, insufficient weight is given to the impact of broad changes in the world economy. Moreover, there are few statistics: sixteen statistical tables have to support these 340 pages of text, eight of them on T. G. Kessinger's single section on North India. This reflects a genuine paucity of factual evidence; but there is a lurking suspicion that it is also because this period of Indian economic history has not yet reached the stage of quantification.

It is with Chapter Four, on "National Income" during the whole two centuries, by A. Heston, that the book suddenly moves from traditional description to modern economic analysis and adequate statistical evidence. Thereafter individual chapters deal with the major topics of economic history on an all-Indian basis: "Population", "The Occupational Structure", "The Growth of Large-scale Industry to 1947", "Transport and Railways", "Money and Credit", "Foreign trade and Balance of Payments (1757-1947)", "Price Movements and Fluctuation in Economic Activity (1860-1947)" and "The Fiscal System". Finally, there are chapters on the Indian and Pakistan economies after independence. Amazingly, there is no chapter specifically on agriculture after 1857: inevitably it comes into a number of chapters, but there is no serious attempt to review the standard works by Blyn and others, nor to measure and explain the failure of Indian agriculture to perform its normally historic function of providing a surplus for investment in modernization of the economy.

It would be impossible and invidious to comment individually on all these chapters. Let us, instead, consider the book as a whole. What light does it throw on the causes of Indian poverty and in particular on the economic consequences of British rule? Do these contributors manage to look at the problem in new ways, particularly with the hindsight provided by some thirty years of post-colonial history? Alternatively, do they provide evidence on which a new and more satisfactory hypothesis could be based?

The standard (one might even call it the coarse) Indian nationalist standpoint on the imperial impact is bluntly stated here by A. Vaidyanathan, at the start of his chapter on "The Indian Economy since Independence". During the colonial era, government's economic policies in India were concerned more with protecting and promoting British interests than with advancing the welfare of the Indian population... [This was particularly true of policies on transport, public works and industry]. There was some shift in attitudes especially since the 1930s signalling a more active interest in developmental problems but this did not make any significant difference.

Altogether, the pre-Independence period was a period of stagnation for the Indian economy. After which he goes on to show how after 1947 Congress, by adopting appropriate development policies which the British had ignored, broke through this stagnation. The point of course, has been the conventional wisdom: it is only quite recently that it has been seriously challenged. One way to measure the quality of this book is to see how these authors approach this fundamental problem, either directly or by inference. How far do their evidence and arguments support Vaidyanathan's blunt assertion? The question can best be approached by dividing it into the two distinct issues raised in the quotation above: the nature of development in an

of British policy and the quite different question whether 1947 marked a fundamental break between a stagnant and a dynamic Indian economy.

From the huge mass of evidence in this book the broad answer to the first question is that the British did indeed impose their own concepts on India and did pursue their own interests there; but they did not invariably ignore Indian interests and often attempted to further them in ways consistent with their own principles of political economy. Irrigation, especially during the period 1860 to 1900, was undertaken not only to increase commodity production but also to reduce the chances of famine. Not enough was done, because such works had to earn a surplus, but the achievement remains substantial. Railways, also, were built for a mixture of political, economic and social motives. The early lines were too expensive because of the five per cent return guaranteed to private firms; there was excessive concern to link commodity producers with ports and to facilitate distribution of British imports; differential freight rates were a hardship to many; but from about 1880 to 1920 real charges declined substantially and the overall effect on the Indian economy was profound and beneficial.

Monetary policy, the most recondite aspect of Indian history, was certainly intended to facilitate fiscal and commercial intercourse with Britain, and the notorious revaluations of the rupee in 1893 and 1927 were probably against India's best economic interests, as nationalists proclaimed at the time. Yet India had a fiduciary currency from 1861, was never subjected to the rigours of the Colonial Sterling Exchange Standard imposed on most British colonies; and A. D. Chaudhary's strongest criticism is that the British were too concerned with exchange ratios and not enough with the elasticity of money supply. Commercial banking was too exclusively controlled by British firms, which may have deterred some Indian would-be entrepreneurs, and the poor were too dependent on usurious moneylenders; but there is no overall assessment here of the economic consequences of the monetary and credit systems.

In his very thorough and balanced treatment of "Foreign Trade and the Balance of Payments", K. N. Chaudhuri sustains the view that British policy, particularly on tariffs and the excise, was indeed calculated to facilitate India's incorporation into the expanding international economy of the later nineteenth century, to maximize British exports and to help offset Britain's adverse balance on visible trade by enabling her to run a large surplus on direct trade with India. The "Drain", representing interest and other payments due to Britain, of which so much has been made by nationalists since Naroji invented the concept in the 1870s, was indeed a burden on India's balance of payments; but Chaudhuri concludes that there were compensating advantages for India from incorporation into the international economy and that it was less the "Drain" than failure by the Indian government to use India's consistently favourable trading balance to modernize the economy that was the main defect in British commercial policy.

Industry, of course, has always been at the centre of this debate; and Morris D. Morris, in a chapter of some 120 pages, surveys and reconsiders the whole complex story from the early nineteenth century to 1947. Starting from the premise (clearly stated by Raychaudhuri in the first chapter) that there is no evidence that Indian industry before the British occupation showed any propensity to generate capitalist modes of production or class relations, Morris argues that limited performance was the result of complex Indian conditions and of weakness on both the demand and supply sides, rather than of specific British policies, inadequate though these may have been. No single act of policy or single change of behaviour could have made for much more rapid progress.

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than did occur. It is not that India was caught in a low level equilibrium trap from which, once liberated, development would be cumulative. . . . Rapid and sustained industrial expansion on a broad front required not only an extensive array of basic social, political and economic pre-conditions but also the development of an institutionalized capacity to solve new problems that continually emerged in the process of change.

It may well be that this institutionalized capacity was still lacking after nearly two centuries of British rule and that only an independent India could hope to tackle the structural obstacles to industrial growth. That is certainly a valid criticism of the Raj. But none of the chapters mentioned above supports the crude assertion that British rule was the prime or sole cause of limited development. Moreover, when we turn to Heston's Chapter Four, "National Income", the statistics do not suggest a pattern of undifferentiated stagnation before 1947. In fact, some striking discontinuities emerge which correlate with much evidence in other chapters. Broadly, and despite inadequate statistical material before the 1850s (after which India became the only "third world" country with a full statistical apparatus before the mid-twentieth century), it seems that the British Indian economy went through three distinct phases. From the later eighteenth century to the 1850s there was very little overall growth, though the evidence for this proposition is not in fact provided here, but the economy was partly restructured so that handicraft production of textiles for the export market was gradually replaced by expanded commodity production. This was the so-called "de-industrialization" of India, though in fact the majority of industry producing for the home market was unaffected.

But during the second phase, from about 1860 to perhaps 1920-21 (a critical date) the economy grew quite fast, by contemporary European and world standards, as part of the expanding international economy to which India was increasingly linked by improved internal and maritime transport and by the nexus of financial and commercial organizations. This was also the period of industrialization in cotton, jute, coal and eventually iron and steel. The net domestic product at constant 1946-7 prices rose from Rs 30,393 million in 1868-9 to Rs 52,168 million in 1915-16, or by 71.6 per cent in 46 years, a simple average of 1.54 per cent. On M. Mukherjee's figures, per capita real incomes at constant 1946-7 prices rose between 1870 and 1920 from Rs 125 to Rs 184, an increase of

Rs 59 or 47.2 per cent. By the standards of Indian growth between 1930 and 1965 this was slow; but it represented roughly 60 per cent of the rate of growth of the British economy during the same period, though the starting-point was much lower because of the relative stagnation of the Indian economy during the century before 1860 when the British economy was growing rapidly. Moreover, by contrast with the post-independence era, this growth had to be paid for by India through export surpluses, foreign capital borrowed on commercial terms and domestic savings: there was no foreign aid and foreign private investment was mainly in the infrastructure.

Thus the classical period of free trade in India was not stagnant: this was when India began to remove some of the structural obstacles to sustained growth and did so by using its own resources. Although the rate of transformation was much less rapid than, for example, Karl Marx predicted in his famous *New York Daily Tribune* article of August 8, 1853, this was because it proved far more difficult, there and in almost all less-developed countries subsequently, to create adequate linkages between the modern and other sectors of the economy.

1920-21 marked another major watershed. With the failure of the international economy to regain its pre-1914 dynamic, Indian economic development was bound to be affected and the changes are indicated in several chapters of this book. From 1921-2 to 1946-7 there was no increase in agricultural production but from 1921 population growth accelerated: from an annual growth rate of 1.01 per cent in the 1920s to 1.4 per cent in the 1930s. With industrial growth, important as it was, too small significantly to affect the result, there was no increase in per capita incomes in real terms: the figures for 1920 and 1950 are identical. This, then, was the stagnation complained of by Vaidyanathan. The irony is that 1921 also marked the beginning of the end of the old colonial system in India, symbolized by the recommendation of the Fiscal Commission that India should be allowed fiscal autonomy and a protective tariff. During the next twenty years, as Morris and K. N. Chaudhuri show, India rapidly became a protectionist country and there was a very substantial growth in the industrial sector, actively promoted by the Tariff Board created in 1923, which was barely affected by the depression of the early 1930s. By 1939 India was virtually self-sufficient in a wide range of consumer goods, though the agricultural sector suffered from a deterioration in its terms of trade both within India and abroad.

There were other important changes in the direction of an autonomous and managed economy. In 1935 India got a central bank, the Reserve Bank of India. The tax structure was changing fast. Land revenue, the staple of nineteenth-century public finance, dropped from 53 per cent of total tax revenue in 1900-01 to 7 per cent in 1946-7, while customs duties rose from 9 per cent to 22 per cent (declining from a peak of 36 per cent in 1930-31) and taxes on income rose from 3 to 37 per cent. During the Second World War the government resorted to deficit financing, price controls and economic planning: the Department of Planning, set up in 1944 laid the foundations for the post-independence managed economy.

Thus, the first period since the mid-nineteenth century when the Indian economy failed to grow was also that in which the fundamental features of the nineteenth-century British imperial system were being discarded. There is no suggestion, of course, that these facts were causally related. Stagnation was the result of stagnation in the international economy to which India had been geared; and the only telling criticism that the authors of these chapters make of British policy in the inter-war years is that the rupee was fixed too high in 1927 (though devaluation, of course, in 1931, effectively removed that disability) and that tax burdens, made inflexible by externally fixed defence, administrative and Home Service charges, were unacceptably high at a time of recession.

This is the background to the modern nationalist claim that India could and did only achieve substantial economic growth when exploitative

and unimaginative British control was removed. The argument that emerges from this book is not that British rule was either disinterested or optimal for India; rather that, from a relatively low level in the mid-nineteenth century, India did in fact achieve a significant rate of growth in most sectors which was related to that of Britain and other countries so long as the international economy was growing. After 1930 that system failed to promote significant growth in any part of the world as India suffered, though not as much as many other countries. It is, of course, arguable that an independent Indian

increased expenditure went to finance the war effort under British control; but there were two long-lasting effects. First, India was at last broken into much higher levels of taxation, particularly of corporate and private incomes. Second, much of this expenditure was credited to India by Britain, so that by 1945 the sterling public debt was eliminated and India held Rs 17 billion in foreign assets. With British private investment in India at only about Rs 2,300 million, India (after 1947 also Pakistan) had small external liabilities and relatively small internal public debts. Both

experience of Pakistan, as shown in Chapter Fourteen, was similar, though with much less satisfactory results, particularly in East Pakistan, which experienced virtually no growth in the period. India's growth was due much less to the end of British rule and adoption of a managed economy than to the unique circumstances of the international economy during the two decades after 1950. India was then able to use her large foreign reserves and unprecedented quantities of foreign loans and grants to create a heavy industrial infrastructure and to increase the yield of agriculture. This investment produced a growth rate of about 4 per cent from 1950 to 1964-5, though only about 2 per cent in per capita terms. Moreover, from the mid-1960s this growth rate slowed up: for 1963-4 to 1970-71 the national domestic product grew at 3 per cent, 1 per cent in per capita terms. From the same period other adverse trends became apparent: the growth in agricultural production dropped below the incremental rate of population growth; levels of investment declined; public enterprises, in which so much new capital had been invested, produced negligible savings for new investment; the rate of increase in total government receipts slowed up and a higher proportion had to be spent on transfers to states, etc., on subsidies to exporters, and on interest on the debt and defence which, by 1970-71, were consuming 16.2 and 18.4 per cent respectively of total revenue.

Thus the general conclusion, drawn from evidence in this book, seems to be that the antithesis commonly drawn between a stagnant colonial India and a dynamic independent country is misleading. The real contrast is between the type of economy and its associated rate of growth characteristic of the open international economy of the period from c 1850 to 1914 and that typical of the period after 1950, with the 1920s and 1930s as a transitional period, when the old system was in disarray and the new had not yet been fully born. During the first period India achieved substantial growth in real terms of more than 1 per cent a year which was below but related to that in Britain and many other countries. During the decades after 1950 India's rate of growth was much faster; but that too was in line with international trends. According to the *United Nations Statistical Year Book for 1978*, average per capita incomes for all LDCs with market economies rose by a factor of 1.6 in current prices between 1960 and 1970 and by 2.4 between 1960 and 1976. Between 1960 and 1970, on these figures, average incomes in India rose from US \$73 to US \$100, or by 36 per cent. But other countries, taking advantage of the same favourable circumstances, did better. In Hong Kong (an open and still colonial economy) average incomes rose from US \$346 to US \$778 (123.5 per cent); Ivory Coast, also virtually an open economy under strong French influence, from US \$179 to US \$342 (93.8 per cent); in Kenya, to US \$84 to US \$143 (70.2 per cent); and even Tanzania, one of the poorest countries in the world, from US \$53 to US \$97 (83 per cent).

This is not to belittle India's impressive achievement, merely to suggest that her post-independence performance must be seen in terms of a totally changed international situation rather than simply of the transition from colonialism to independence. Moreover, to end on a depressing note, almost all the indicators suggest that the achievements of the first two decades after 1950 may prove merely to have raised India to a higher but still very low level of economic performance and affluence, with the certainty that growth rates could be sustained, as the various dynamic forces that made accelerated growth possible after 1950 began to lose their force. It is one of the virtues of this huge volume that, despite large gaps in the data, it is now possible, for the first time, to put one's finger on the development of the Indian economy in a single focus over the two centuries of British rule and the first decade of independence.

*The Growth of the International Economy 1820-1980: An Introductory Text* by A. G. Kenwood and A. Loughheed (336pp; George Allen and Unwin, Paperback, £6.95; 0 04 33333 5) is the second edition of the book which was first published in 1971. Part Three, "The Role of the National Economy" is entirely new.

## Themes and genres

Richard Stoneman

DAVID A. CAMPBELL

*The Golden Lyre: The Themes of the Greek Lyric Poets*  
312pp. Duckworth. £28.  
0 7156 1563 7

WILLIAM MULLEN

*Choreia: Pindar and Dance*  
275pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £21.70 (paperback, £6).  
0 691 06528 4

The texts and fragments that remain of the lyric poets of archaic Greece will never lack for readers who admire the freshness of spirit and language which reflect the epoch of the "discovery of the individual". A book that promises a new survey and introduction to these poets should be eagerly anticipated and enthusiastically welcomed.

It must be said, however, that eagerness will be dashed, and enthusiasm drowned, in anyone who peruses *The Golden Lyre*. The dust-jacket presents it as the ideal introduction for students, because the texts are printed with accompanying translations. It is not the price alone that invalidates this claim, nor the fact that both the obvious competitors, C. M. Bowra's *Greek Lyric Poetry* (1961) and G. M. Kirkwood's *Early Greek Monody* (1974), also print translations of all the Greek quoted. I fear rather that the student will come away with no clear impression of these uncommonly individualistic poets, whose modes, styles and personae, and the scholarly problems they evoke, demand discriminating attention.

It seemed at first blush an interesting novelty to approach the subject through themes rather than poet by poet. It is here that the original contribution of *The Golden Lyre* is to be found. Each chapter takes a theme: Love; Wine; Athletics; Politics;

Friends and Enemies; Gods and Heroes; Life and Death; Poetry and Music; and each, valuably, begins with a discussion of the roots in Homer of the literary treatment of the theme in question. Though such material was to be found in the commentaries (including David A. Campbell's own useful volume of 1967), it is instructive to have it laid out for comparison and contrast.

Here, however, the advantage ends. The arrangement of material by themes ignores and conceals not only the individuality of the poets, but, even more importantly, the distinction of the genres to which the poems belong. One wonders if Campbell has ever heard of genre or of the extensive discussion of its importance in recent scholarship, as he marches on, lumping choral victory-ode with elegiac, marriage-song with maiden-song, hymn with lampoon, in a quest to compile a bulging dossier of the poets' "views" on these topics. On page 99 he writes, "Solon saw the iambic trimeter as the appropriate vehicle for *oneia*, reproach." *Lampro* however means "lampoon", and is the name of a genre: Solon had no choice. The emphasis on the whim of the poet is typical, insidious and wrong.

The symposium or drinking-party is also crucial, both as theme, image and setting for many types of poetry: drinking-song, epinician ode, love-poem. All Campbell can say to face this complex significance is "wine was a favourite theme of the lyric poets". Why? Which ones? Does "lyric" encompass "elegiac" and "iambic", "monodic" as well as "choral"? What is the function of the theme in different types of poem? These fundamental questions remain undiscussed, even unnoticed.

Again, the writings attributed to Theognis form a fascinating, if repetitive, *summa* of aristocratic attitudes and themes as expressed in the sympotic medium of the elegiac couplet. Here if anywhere is a complex of poetry that demands to be seen

whole. Yet discussion is split between chapters on Friends and Enemies, Politics, and Love and Wine, so that the interrelation of Theognidean attitudes is obscured and trivialized.

The epithalamion or marriage-song, too, gets a mention only in passing under the topic of myth, where it is lumped together in a jumble with the

athletics he writes as if Pindar celebrated athletes simply because he felt like it.

The system breaks down altogether when Archilochus' lines on the topography of Thasos appear under the heading of Politics, Simonides' lines on the dead at Thermopylae under Gods and Heroes, and Archilochus' lines on his spear under Wine.

Even the use of Homeric material is vitiated by a failure of discrimination. On page 35 Campbell notes Homer's description of a champion as "a match for Ares", and regards this as "an anticipation of the lyric poets". But Pindar and Bacchylides never compare mortals to gods, and much of Pindar's moralizing is devoted to the unbridgeable difference between them (eg. *Nem.* 6. 1ff). On page 206 Campbell cites Hermann Fränkel's analysis of archaic man as "subject to day and liable to vicissitude", and assimilates this to the view expressed by Diomedes in *Iliad* 6; but the *onechania*, powerlessness, of Archilochus is the opposite of the conclusion of heroism that Diomedes draws. Is Campbell saying that lyric and Homeric man differ not a whit? I am not even sure that he is aware of the inconsistency.

The book is pervaded by such sloppiness. On page 189 he quotes and translates Pindar's remark "For me nothing of the gods' doing seems too incredible for wonder", and glosses this "the gods' power is beyond belief", which as far as I can see means the exact opposite. On page 50 he seems unable to make up his mind whether Simonides wrote drinking-songs or not. On page 164 he tells us that "scholars argued over the authorship of the *Funerary Games of Pellas*". He does not tell us which ones, or who was right. I cannot list the examples that cry out for the red pencil. The book also abounds in banal remarks such as "Solon uses many literary devices in this poem".

There are three good pages on

lyric-epic of Stesichorus, the exemplary mythic narratives of Pindar, and the hymnic lyrics of Alcæus. Campbell does not consider for what occasions these works were written, when and where they were performed, what constraints this imposed. He seems not to have absorbed the implications of the fact that all choral lyrics, at least, were written to commission, since in the chapter on



A clay head of Athena, 490 BC, in the Olympia Museum; reproduced from *The Gods of Greece*, with text by Arianna Stassinopoulou and photographs by Roloff Beny (216pp, with 40 colour and 85 black-and-white illustrations. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £15. 0 297 78114 6).

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## commentary

## In a child's heaven

Wilfrid Mellers

VIRGIL THOMSON

Four Saints in Three Acts  
 Almeida Theatre, Islington

Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson, expatriate Americans in Paris, collaborated on *Four Saints in Three Acts* in 1927-28; in 1934 it was produced on Broadway, running for sixty nights – not much for a musical, but impressive for an "opera". Since then it hasn't become and hardly could become a repertory piece; but it has never been swallowed in the sands of time. Sporadic performances continue to enchant: as on the whole did the one presented in the Almeida Theatre's Spring Festival. The choice of the spring-like and festive piece was appropriate; and that spring of its nature cannot "date" may offer a clue to these saints' longevity. Stein's text looks like infantile prattle, while Thomson's music consists of rudimentary diatonic concords, mostly in root position, accompanying snatches of tootling tune. Yet both words and music continue to haunt as well as charm us; and the reason may be that they reveal the poetry within everyday triviality. The understatement, and the stammer, are inherent in the musical values of Stein's words; which are spontaneously precipitated into Thomson's music, so that the two

dimensions have no separate identity. We're told that the composer improvised his setting of each act, at the keyboard, revising after the event. What came out was his intuitive life of memory and dream, for the ragbag of musical clichés amounts to "a virtual total recall of my Southern Baptist childhood". Fragments of kiddies' ditties, idiotic practice in rising sequences, parlour ballads and operettas, rural hoedowns, hillbilly waltzes, hints of sleazy Tex Mex tango and shanty-bar ragtime well with parade marches, evangelical hymnody and gospel musics white and black.

The work inhabits an existential present wherein musical events are juxtaposed as arbitrarily as are Stein's anti-chronological "scenes". Here is another reason for the piece's survival: it was prophetic in its denial of "Western" consciousness, conscience and temporality. If it has affinities with the then contemporary collage techniques of Satie, which are child-like but not childish, it looks forward to the eternal Now of John Cage. Stein and Thomson made an opera about saints precisely because saints are presumptively child-like. When Cage used the term landscape to describe some of his compositions of sounds in time, equated with things in space, he recalled Stein's statement that in writing her opera she "put a number of saints into a landscape", making a play (or above?) consciousness so that, for instance, in the ensemble on the phrase "Once in a while" we seem to walk around the words, asking unanswered questions about what each means, in and out of context. The wonderment, and the stammer, are inherent in the musical values of Stein's words; which are spontaneously precipitated into Thomson's music, so that the two

## Browsing for broadsides

Alan Bell

London Antiquarian Book Fair  
 Europa Hotel, Grosvenor Square,  
 London W1

Now that regional antiquarian book fairs have proliferated so widely, it is difficult to keep up with the calendar of provincial events. Some centres seem to have a permanent set of AA "Book Fair" signs leading the way to stalls of collectibles in the hotel ballrooms of county towns. The Antiquarian Booksellers Association's London fair in mid-June has, however, long been a fixed point in the bibliophilic calendar, and there is always plenty doing in the London book world at the time – in the salerooms and bookshops – to make "Fair Week" a regular meeting time for collectors and dealers.

Just as the very grand antiques fairs, with furniture and plate of the highest museum quality, ought to be obligatory viewing for serious but impoverished collectors who should keep their standards suitably elevated, the principal Antiquarian Book Fair provides an opportunity for educated browsing, even if the result is only to make the collector return home to move yet more apparently ordinary books into his glazed book-cases, and to worry about insurance premiums.

This year's fair, at the Europa Hotel, Grosvenor Square, from June 14 to 16, will be the twenty-fifth in a series which began as a crowded but cosy affair in the National Book League, then in Albemarle Street. The mixture will be much as before. The opening speech is traditionally inaudible except to a select few clustered round the rostrum, while the other early birds wait impatiently – not without some futile reservations of interesting material – for business to begin. This year Geoffrey Smith will perform the opening ceremony. There is usually a small exhibition, sometimes from special collections, and this year the display will be mounted by the Victorian Society, which also celebrates its silver jubilee.

No less than seventy-four stalls and 104 exhibitors – the maximum that can be accommodated in the Europa ballroom – will cater for practically every conceivable need, whether it is books on Mauritius and Réunion or pamphlets about the early history of Hendon Aerodrome. The catalogue gives a pleasant foretaste of the wares on offer. There are grand books like the 1521 Comedie edition of Vitruvius, *De architectura libri decem*, at \$9,500, and manuscripts like Henry VIII's letter of 1529 to the Regent of France offering to intercede in the war between France and the Empire, three-quarters of a folio sheet at £30,000. But in the catalogue, as so often on the stalls themselves, it is the more out-of-the-way subjects and ephemera that are the most attractive to the general collector, like a rare Kentish broadside about the Biddenden Maids. There is even an inflatable globe twelve feet in circumference, invented by a Bristol schoolmaster in 1830 (£1,500), which when deflated "may be placed in a gentleman's side pocket" (security at the Book Fair is always closely watched by uniformed attendants at the door).

Looking back in a preface to the 1983 catalogue, Alan G. Thomas, one of the organizers of the first event, recalls the precarious finances and hand-to-mouth publicity arrangements of 1958. The organization has improved greatly since then, and for 1984 plans are already in hand for an even larger fair at another venue, to coincide with an international booksellers' congress in London.

This year's catalogue carries an advertisement for a firm specializing in computer systems for the antiquarian book trade. They may well prove a blessing for the specialized collector whose interests could be matched against stock records at the touch of a key, but one hopes that it will not take away too much of the fun of browsing from a recreation where serendipity so often provides much extra excitement. And customers can only hope that not too much of the cost of computer installations is rather old-fashioned trade is passed on to the consumer.



"St Michael Weighing Souls", a Dutch miniature of 1450-75 from the Bute Collection, which is to be sold at Sotheby's on June 13.

saint, white grin beaming from black mask. The Almeida production had a mainly black cast, operating in oratorio style, with minimal movement. There's nothing against this in principle, for although *Four Saints* is only ambiguously a religious work, it is ritualistic, seeking to override Time through stylized movement and incantation. Oratorio-style production does however entail problems in that it offers no escape into the excitations of visual magic and choreographic covorting. If one is to concentrate on text and music the performance must be good; and because it is simple, the music is far from easy. Stein was justified in describing her libretto as "an Opera to be Sung": these gullest tunes call for a lovely cantabile as well as for impeccable enunciation; while the thinly if pungently scored orchestral textures demand the most elegant precision. Only if the music is approached in wide-eyed, open-eared seriousness will its still astonishing transitions from inanity to grandeur (the end of Act II), from hilarity to pathos (the famous Vision of the Holy Ghost or "pigeons on the grass alas" episode), or from force to gravity (the "dead-wed-lead" funeral procession), aesthetically.

function effectively. Among the artists here the Compère and Commère sounded as respectively noble and luscious as they looked; St Ignatius had some presence and vocal authority. The other soloists were patchy, though they often rose to their modest visionary moments. The chorus was shaky in ensemble, wobbly in intonation; and the orchestra too often sounded as though it was in fact parading the street, blowing in church, stomping at the barbecue. It won't wash to object that that's how they *should* sound, for they must persuade us that we're hearing these musics in a child's heaven; although that's a tall order the recent Nonesuch recording (79035) proves that it's possible. Meanwhile, we must be earthly grateful and must hope that next year the Saints' fiftieth birthday, may provide occasion for the first professional theatrical performance in this country. If we think of *Four Saints* as anticipatory of, but so much more amiable than, our current minimalist it may be even more "with it" now than it was in the 1930s. Expertly sung, played and produced it could justify itself financially as well as aesthetically.

## Author, Author

Competition No 126  
 Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office no later than July 1. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Enthies, marked "Author, Author 126" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Exbury House, St John's Lane, London EC4M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on July 8.

1. — stood far back, his hat in his hand, counting the bare heads. Twelve, I'm thirteen. No. The chap in the macintosh is thirteen. Death's number. Where the deuce did he pop out? He wasn't in the chapel, that I swear. Silly superstition: that about thirteen.

And listen to an old man not at all. They want the young men's whispering and sighing.

Competition No 122  
 Winner: Mr T. Carswell  
 Answers:

1. Blushing, she leaned towards him, expecting a kiss, but he only patted her hair and said:  
 "These silly chignons! Instead of stroking my child's hair, I stroke the hair of some departed old woman."  
 Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*.

2. "Pretty child! Your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it. But we can soon alter all that. A thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvellous result in a very brief space of time."  
 Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

3. Kissing her hair I sat against her feet  
 Wave and unwave it, wound and found it sweet  
 Made fast therewith her hands down  
 Deep as deep flowers and dreamy like  
 With her own tresses bound and found  
 Kissing her hair  
 A. C. Swinburne, "Roundel".

## Medium hard

Graham Swift

The Ploughman's Lunch  
 Gate Cinema, Notting Hill

We are by now only too used to the paradox that because the media so thoroughly filter and mould our sense of contemporary reality their capacity and right to judge that reality are suspect. So one looks hopefully to the new impetus in British cinema for the opportunity to step outside the vicious circle and take an independent, critical view. Richard Eyre's *The Ploughman's Lunch* is a bold attempt to do this. The irony, however, is that the new cinema owes so much itself to the established media that it has yet to shed vestiges of the same paradox. In this film one often has to disentangle criticism of the media from media-knowingness, and fresh perception from the technically accomplished but indiscriminating image.

Media-manipulation is certainly tackled head-on. Scenes occur in radio news rooms, TV studios; and the remarkable climactic sequence, actually shot at the 1982 Brighton Conservative conference, leaves little doubt that political rallies are also journalists' jamborees. The title itself stems from a scene in which a TV commercials director explains that a "ploughman's lunch", far from being traditional British fare, is the product of a 1960s advertising campaign. It is a neat symbol of how a popular belief can inhere in a quite fabricated image and it acquires force when juxtaposed with Mrs Thatcher's invocation, before matted cameras at Brighton, of the "spirit" of the Falklands.

To suggest that political propaganda is akin to commercial gimmickry is, however, scarcely far-reaching. And often the film rests on mere juxtaposition or the satisfaction of a loaded image (a risky thing when the power of images is half the subject) without any accompanying exploration. Thus at one point the main character (Jonathan Pryce) is seen rushing to work from his South London flat through the streets of Brixton (plainly labelled by a sign over the Tube station). This drove another piece into the mosaic of contemporary British concerns, but the scene affords no more than this gratuitous denotative effect. And while the location shooting generally is done with great panache there is sometimes a relish for the location as location which deadens rather than reinforces the dramatic energy.

## Interdependent needs

Peter Kemp

Walter and June  
 Channel 4

David Cook excels in steady scrutiny of the disturbed and the disturbing. His writings directly and desolately observe the plight of the psychologically damaged or mentally handicapped. He aims to show how such people, naturally disadvantaged, can soon become socially penalized as well. *Walter* – an adaptation of which was broadcast on Channel 4's opening night – shows an affable, simple-minded man losing the pathetic minimum of ordinary life he once enjoyed when he is shut away amid the institutional routines and upsets of a long-stay mental hospital. Being in care, the book makes bleakly clear, is not the same as being cared about; a Home is very different from a home.

*Walter and June* – Cook's film version of his sequel, *Winter Doves* – depicts Walter's brief escape from the environment into both the outside world and a close relationship. It begins with his finding an unlikely partner – June, a suicidally depressive inmate of the hospital's new mother and baby unit. From most points of

The film is sustained by a cohesive central argument: that political and personal morality parallel and reflect each other. This focuses on the self-seeking attempts of a radio news editor to rewrite the history of the Suez crisis, firstly to please a right-wing publisher and secondly to win the favour (he wins rather more) of a socialist lady historian whose daughter he aims to seduce. The relationship of political interpretation to private morality is one thing – the film is strongest in showing how readily allegiances and intellectual stances waver before personal ambitions and involvements. But the relationship of politics itself to private morality is another; and here there is often a resort to crude analogy, as when the news editor, being shown by the historian's daughter some brazenly imperialist news-reels of the Suez intervention, sizes her up rapaciously with his eyes.

Ian McEwan's deft script achieves some succinct dramatic strokes, notably when the news editor – revealing just how much encumbering obligation he will sacrifice for the advantage of the moment – tells the historian's daughter that his parents, who are alive, are dead. Yet there is a feeling that the writer's verbal and psychological resources have been swamped by an overcrowded visual approach or dissipated by the range of topics embraced. McEwan has a gift for intense, linear narrative. Here, so many touchstones of 1980s Britain are brought in laterally that inevitably some are skimpily treated – the women peace campaigners, for example, whose introduction rather strains the plot, are reduced to woolly-hatted, wide-eyed clichés. And though it may be the film's point that its people are ciphers playing an unpleasant game, the sense of underlying motivation is often lacking, particularly with the main character.

With that proviso, Jonathan Pryce as the news editor is a convincing mixture of blandness and callousness. Callousness of a more cordial, candid kind is exuded by Frank Finlay as the commercial director. And Rosemary Harris as the earnest but susceptible historian and Charlie Dore as her brittle daughter give fine performances.

*The Ploughman's Lunch* is an effective claustrophobic study of nasty people operating in a nasty world. Yet the claustrophobia may in part arise from a lack of distance between subject and treatment. Richard Eyre directs with superb virtuosity and a quick eye – but an eye that can be almost too quick, too easily drawn, to maintain stringent scrutiny.

## Production lines

Alan Jenkins

Passion  
 Camden Plaza

There are two films in Jean-Luc Godard's *Passion*; they don't quite tear each other apart, but neither do they settle down happily together. One, Godard's film, abounds in quintessential Godard themes; it concerns (as is beginning to seem obligatory with European directors) the making up of films, and the making up of capitalist society – productions and Production, the one mirroring or falling foul of the other. Studio, hotel and factory each become an arena for the master-slave dialectic, for cynical power-plays and abject capitulations. There are affairs of a sort, promiscuous goings-on, loyalties, jealousies, betrayals of all kinds; life here consists of patchy desire, incomplete understanding and tattered purpose. The other, Godard's film, director hero's "film" is a lush extravaganza of *tableaux vivants* from paintings by Delacroix, Rembrandt, Velázquez and so on. It is a beautiful affair of rich, warm colour and seductive textures; girls' bodies are draped nude around bath-side and battlefield, bloodied corpses litter the studio floor. In the first film, all passion is undercut by irony or farce; in the second, it is posed and lit up with paradoxical intensity and care. Both can easily seem a shambling, and those who already regard Godard with suspicion will find plenty here to confirm it.

For the others, the film is a feast of ramifying ironies and spellbinding images. Production and Production interest through the offices of a tyrannical but impotent industrialist – whose factory proves a fertile source of extras for the film, in the shape of young girl employees. One such girl, whom he has sacked, wages a one-woman war on the system and is "taken up" by the director; while the rich man's wife, who falls for the director too, is tempted by him into acting. Godard's familiar obsessions with work and love are revived before us by these four, in conflict, in harmony and in uneasy, complex parallelism. There is nothing new about Godard's attitude of "the businessman" and little new about his own self-caricature; the director of the film "Passion" bears a close resemblance to the *cinéma de Saave qui peut*, phallicistic, morosely self-absorbed, preoccupied by sex and politics, unpredictable and wayward, but this time he is given an added

dimension of glamour: he is a Pole, and people – especially girls – keep referring to "what is happening in Poland" (there are dark hints that he has a wife and child there) as if that excused everything. There is nothing surprising, either, in the camera's fixation with the faces of beautiful or "fascinating" women; here its loyalties are divided – like those of the directors – between that of Isabelle the factory-girl, and Hanna the *haute bourgeoisie*. They are Isabelle Huppert and Hanna Schygulla; the habit of giving names can lead an appealing intimacy or it can make the whole enterprise seem annoyingly like an in joke.

What is new (thought it was perhaps signalled at many points in *Sauve qui peut*) is the tenderness with which people are caught in their moments of self-surrender and vulnerability – of quiet passion – and the contrasting velvet and energy of the anorectic human comedy that rattles on around them. Most scenes are crowded, noisy, voluble; despite the statutory despair of the director at his paymasters' philistine demands for a "story", Godard's film vigorously if elliptically throws itself into telling one. The points may have been made before – the working-class Isabelle (a less vacuous Huppert than is customary, but a more pathetic one, as she is given a crippling stutter) is exploited and abandoned by the director as she is by the boss; the emotionally tougher Hanna has the survival-instincts of women of her class; that class, in the form of her husband, teeters on the edge of neurotic self-destruction; everyone is in trouble, though both love and work offer their brief redemptive glories; "art", no matter how exquisite, is not a solution, but an escape, and must be celebrated as such (it can even bring a momentary flutter to the hearts of working girls and send them off to Poland in pursuit of its creator); and there is nothing so great about being in films anyway (the attraction of the director is surely intended to perplex).

But such observations are themselves way beside the point, and neither Godard's romanticism nor his realism is susceptible to arguments of the discursive-analytical kind. This does not make him particularly mysterious, and certainly not beyond research; but on the evidence of this film and his previous one a new humour and poignancy a richer attention to the fine grain of human gesture and feeling, are well on the way to overtaking the simple-minded contrasts of the films that made him a cult.

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## American notes

## Christopher Hitchens

Many people have an unfriendly impression of American broadcasting as a howling electronic wilderness of catshaws, quizzes, brute sex and sleazy violence, the whole padded out with brainless ads. And it really is not unfair to describe large swathes of it as desolate, homogeneous and mediocre. Americans complain about it far more than guests do. The wireless, often, is not much better than the television. "Chewing gum for the ears" is one of the most indulgent observations that I have heard. For this reason, the style and programming of National Public Radio (NPR) have commanded unusual listener loyalty. NPR took a lot of trouble to transmit live operas and concerts, as well as unedited coverage of Congress and (most famously) of the Watergate hearings. NPR ran a serious and worthwhile magazine programme called *All Things Considered*, which gave listeners time to think. NPR did not punctuate everything (or anything) with commercials, and its announcers and hosts talked like human beings instead of like fruit machines.

I'm employing the past tense conditionally, because National Public Radio may be about to vanish, and has already this year taken a terrible pasting. Its president, Frank Mankiewicz (who has just resigned) is a genuine and highly-motivated person, able to make others believe in his ideas, once a Kennedy man and, like many others of the type, almost catastrophically insouciant about money. When the books were last balanced, it seemed that a huge quantity of NPR's operating budget had simply been spent in the happy expectation of better times to come. This, for a corporation which depends on public subsidy rather than commercial sponsorship, is not so much regrettable as rash. The Reagan administration is reducing support for non-business airtime and NPR (some would say ardently) as "elitist". By 1986, government support for public broadcasting will be less than half what it was at the President's inauguration. So that one has the best radio network in the United States in double jeopardy — first from its own want of stewardship and second from an administration which believes that unsentimental forces should determine such things. Easily visible at the top of the next bluff is the spread of commercialism to public television as

well. Channel Thirteen, which has a surprisingly large following for its diet of "quality" blockbusters like *Brideshead Revisited*, already permits large companies to "host" a major show or series without actually advertising on it. This could be euphemized as underwriting rather than promoting. But the slow infiltration of "messages" from the sponsor means that such nice distinctions are, along with their audio and visual counterparts, becoming blurred.

We come now to the question of the sadism of "Hitch". In his recent biography *The Dark Side of Genius* (Little, Brown) Donald Spoto dwells at compelling length on the corrupt greed, the cruelty and the sexual opportunism of his subject. "Hitch", it seems, preferred the nastier kind of practical joke, found women repulsive but fascinating, and used his position as director to inflict humiliations on his actors (keeping Madeline Carroll and Robert Donat, for instance, handcuffed together for a whole day during the shooting of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*). Perhaps unwittingly, Mr Spoto — whose admiration for Hitchcock's film oeuvre is next to idolatrous — has again raised the controversy over *autisme*. This concept, signifying the

equivalence of the film director to the poet or the painter, may have no general application. But if it means anything at all, then Hitchcock was an *autiste*. Nobody ever "signed" a film as he did, and what is *autisme* if it does not mean treating actors like puppets even when they are off stage? American film critics are currently engaged in hot debate over the issue. (There is a pleasing symmetry to this development, in that *The Birds*, released in 1963, was one of the films which originally brought the *autiste* argument to a wide public here, and *The Dark Side of Genius* records that Hitchcock's lurid obsession with Ms Tippi Hedren began during its direction.)

Some critics, such as Richard Greener, are saying that Spoto reveals Hitchcock's essential triviality, both as individual and as director. Ergo, with the double discredit of its exemplar, the theory of *autisme* becomes a thing of shreds and patches. Not so fast. There is an undistributed middle term in the argument. Hitchcock's films are likely to survive any disclosure about his private life, any peak or trough in the vogue for the *autiste*. This opinion, redolent of British empiricism, allows one to enjoy Spoto's book without worrying. In these times, when American directors

are increasingly playing the role of mere executives or packaging managers, the very notion of an *autiste* makes one positively nostalgic.

Eric Hoffer, the demotic philosopher who died last month to extensive eulogies, was to American ideas what Norman Rockwell was to American painting. Defiantly ordinary, he seems able to rise just above kitsch and to reflect something of the elusive "national character". His most famous book, *The True Believer*, says little or nothing that cannot be found in Richard Hofstadter or Wilhelm Reich, but succeeds in flattering the general taste for moderation while saying some shrewd things about the misfit and the fanatic. Likewise, his maxims and aphorisms are perilously close to the cracker-barrel but somehow superior to it. "When we begin to think that most people are no better than we, the world seems full of people who are fairly unpleasant." That makes for more cogitation than most fortune cookies. Hoffer was the object of affection because, of course, he objectified the American Dream. Born of immigrant parents, overcoming childhood blindness, working on the waterfront while reading Montaigne, he eventually caught the eyes of

Presidents and academics. At that point, his writing started to become bland and trite. And anyway, if rags to riches is what the country is all about, why so much surprise when it actually happens to someone? Truth to tell, I'm jealous of Hoffer because he held a unique job which I should have liked myself. In the autumn of his years he was appointed anecdotalist in residence at the University of California at Berkeley.

In a town as infested with gossip and secrets as Washington, it's regularly asked why there is no satire. Or, put another way, why there is no satire magazine. Some say that the place has long ago transcended the satirical. Others say that there is no need for a *Private Eye* because there are already so many informal channels of disclosure. But that still leaves a humour gap. This week, we celebrate the birth of *Mole*: an effort to meet this long-felt want. Alas, *Mole* is no good. It has no irony to speak of, and a very arch sense of parody. The elbow in the ribs seems to be the chosen means of conveying a point, as even the name implies.

There's a dull monograph to be written on why this sort of thing doesn't travel.

## Peasants in Russia

Sir, — John Keep's informative and knowledgeable review (May 27) of Robert Thompson Manning's *The Crisis of the Old Order in Russia* ends, unfortunately, with a very questionable statement. The repression of peasant uprisings by the Imperial government in 1905 was, he says, "much the same thing" as "Stalin's liquidation of the kulaks" since both represented an attempt "to force the intractable peasants into a mould compatible with the overriding interests of [the] state". Surely the comparison is invalid for at least two fundamental reasons? First, suppression of peasant uprisings has nothing to do with agrarian reform (which is what forcing peasants into a preconceived "mould" presumably means) — it is a reaction to a situation. Stalin's liquidation of the "kulaks", on the other hand, formed a constituent part of compulsory collectivization — an agrarian reform and a new "mould" if ever there was one. Second, however brutal the Imperial government may have been in the course of the repression, the latter lasted a short time and its victims were numbered in thousands. The methods and process of collectivization and the protest it suscituated lasted many years, cost many millions of lives, produced an unprecedented famine which claimed still more millions, caused a vast expansion of Lenin's concentration camp system and entirely altered the mode of agricultural ownership and production as well as the relationship of peasants to the state and the pattern of their life. It is not enough, it seems to me, to say with John Keep that the difference between Stalin's policy and that of his Imperial predecessors was merely a question of scale.

KYRIEL FITZLYON.  
2 Arlington Cottages, Sutton Lane,  
London W4.

might first have made sure that I was wrong.

As far as I can understand his letter, Greene seems to suggest that because Johnson approved of the activities of tradesmen, he must therefore have approved of their language. It's a wicked suspicion to entertain of so justifiably eminent a scholar of Johnson's writings as Professor Greene, but I wonder if he has ever glanced at the preface to the dictionary? Or are tradesmen excluded from "the laborious and mercantile part of the people", whose diction is a "fugitive cant", which "cannot be regarded as any part of the durable materials of a language", and is therefore "unworthy of preservation"?

JOHN BARRELL.  
King's College, Cambridge.

From the Greek

Sir, — The poem quoted by Gavin Ewart (April 22) is neither a Scottish folk-song, nor eighteenth-century anonymous, nor even, as Donald Evans suggests (Letters, May 13), the translation of a sixteenth-century French epigram, but an even older Greek joke attributed to Philagrius (about the ninth century). Legman's *Rationale of the Dirty Joke* (1968, 1st series, pp 690-91) offers a translation.

R. I. BARYCZ.  
30 Millmark Grove, London SE14.

## Language Acquisition

Sir, — T. P. Waldron (Letters, May 13, June 3) argues that the study of children's acquisition of their native languages is trivial, bogus and an academic frolic. He complains that researchers make the process appear problematical in order to attract funds. How can I convince him that the acquisition of language is a genuine puzzle and hence that those who work on it are neither foolish nor dishonest?

One line of argument is to point out that the problem has so far resisted all the efforts of the linguists, psychologists and computer scientists who have tried to solve it. Another is to challenge the sceptic to produce his own solution. I have tried both of these tactics. To the first, Waldron retorts that I am merely citing authorities like a medieval theologian. To the second, he cites his own authorities, Darwin and Pavlov, and claims that lack of space prevents him from spelling out how their accounts of animal communication can be extended to explain language acquisition.

I am afraid that it is more than lack of space that prevents Waldron from stating his solution. The ideas of Darwin and Pavlov cannot be extended in a simple or straightforward way to produce a comprehensive theory of language acquisition. Consider, for

example, the speech sounds of a language. Speakers seem to string them together like beads on a string, but analysis with a speech spectrograph establishes that this is an illusion: the cues to several speech sounds often overlap each other in time. Moreover, a particular consonant which is readily identifiable in various utterances may be acoustically quite different from one utterance to another and thus have no cue common to all of its occurrences. It follows that no simple process of associative learning can explain children's mastery of the speech sounds in their language.

It is even more difficult to extend Darwin's and Pavlov's theories to deal with grammar since neither of them analysed language in detail. However, psychologists long ago abandoned theories of grammatical acquisition based on the principles of association and conditioning. They observed that adults reward verisimilitude rather than grammaticality in the speech of their offspring. They noted that children spontaneously entertain complex, though tacit, hypotheses about grammatical rules. The nature of these hypotheses and the mechanism producing them are puzzles that are still under investigation.

The objections to associative theories of meaning are well known and apparently insurmountable: for example, many words do not correspond to things in the world (eg "possibly"); many words, as Wittgenstein observed, denote entities that have no properties in common (eg "games"); and complex sentences express complex relations that cannot be elucidated merely in terms of bonds between stimuli and responses. Even the rate at which children acquire words seems too great to be commensurate with a process of conditioning.

There are indeed many unsolved problems about speech, grammar and meaning. That is why there are no existing computer programs that can identify speech sounds as accurately or as flexibly as human beings, or that embody a complete grammar for a natural language, or that are capable of anything more than the most rudimentary comprehension of discourse. Until these problems are solved, it is unlikely that anyone will be able to formulate a rigorous and complete theory of language acquisition.

Perhaps Waldron will be beyond the reach of these considerations and will stick to his view that they are all part of a vast intellectual conspiracy. If so, the only way for our controversy to be taken up for a conclusion is for him to take up my challenge to devise a computer program that can acquire any natural language (and to show that it does so in the same way as children). If he succeeds, then I shall withdraw; if he fails then perhaps he will think more

kindly of the academics who study language acquisition. Happily it seems that he may accept the challenge. I hope he will inform us of the outcome.

P. N. JOHNSON-LAIRD.  
MRC Applied Psychology Unit, 15  
Chaucer Road, Cambridge.

Sir, — P. N. Johnson-Laird (Letters, May 20) criticizes T. P. Waldron for underestimating the problem of learning a first language, and challenges him to join distinguished colleagues in devising a computer program (or "other method of establishing that his theory is rigorous, complete and consistent") that will teach a natural language in the same ways as children. Without disputing that Waldron may underestimate the difficulty and interest of the problem, I doubt whether challenging him to devise a computer program (as though that will be the answer) is the right way of pointing this out. The difficulty in devising a program is that children are not like computer programs in any interesting way, and they start out with advantages, which include being sociable animals, that are overwhelming but inevitably ignored in the abstractions implicit in the computer analogy. Even if logicians do end up with a theory that is rigorous, complete and consistent, it may nevertheless be a poor theory by scientific standards. As Professor Estes, the doyen of mathematical psychologists, has wisely written, the Piagetian theory might never have been superseded if computers and artificial intelligence had been invented in the sixteenth century.

A. W. STILL.  
Department of Psychology,  
University of Durham.

## Psychohistory

Sir, — I was cheered to see Alan Macfarlane, a formidable reviewer, welcoming John Putnam Demos's new book on witchcraft, minor evils apart, as "important, interesting, thought-provoking, and readable" (May 13). *Entertaining Satan* is all of these things.

One critical comment by your reviewer, however, deserves further ventilation. Macfarlane is unhappy with Demos's use of psychoanalytic categories and vocabulary. He thinks that part of his argument unconvincing and his use of such technical terms as "affects and defences", "narcissism and projection", "unhelpful, since they take the reader 'away from the individuals and their context into obscure and ultimately unsatisfactory abstract speculations'".

I grant that much psychohistory has been needlessly reductionist, treating historical personages as mere patients. Too many psychohistorians have failed to glimpse the social psychology implicit in Sigmund Freud's system of ideas, or to grasp the intellectual pregnancy of his remark that individual

and social psychology are essentially one. I grant, too, that the loose employment of psychoanalytic terminology has often been at war with economy and elegance. Still, I am persuaded that a psychoanalysis, thoroughly understood and judiciously applied, offers the historian a psychological precision instrument that he cannot get elsewhere. The historian is, after all, continuously engaged with his actors' motives and with the picture of the world on which they act, individually and collectively. One way or the other, he must seek to explain these motives, many of them unconscious, and those perceptions, many of them distorted by passions and anxieties. Psychoanalysis is a more dependable guide to these difficult matters than the slapdash commonsensical psychology that most of my colleagues, generally little versed in Freud's writings, are likely to apply. John Demos's book is an exemplary attempt to place minds into their world and to see what it was really like to be a witch, her victim, or her executioner. Well received, though insufficiently recognized, *Entertaining Satan* is not merely a notable advance in our understanding of a puzzling historical phenomenon but should also arouse historians to a debate over method that is long overdue.

PETER GAY.  
Department of History, Yale  
University, New Haven, Connecticut.

## In Translation

Sir, — As far as I know, Mario Vargas Llosa is the author of a masterful novel entitled *Tid Julia y el escribidor* and Helen R. Lane the author of a brilliant translation entitled *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*; yet your reviewer, Nicholas Shakespeare, makes no mention of Ms Lane in his notice of *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* (May 20) — and your editorial headline to the review similarly omits Ms Lane's work by attributing the English text to the Peruvian writer.

When editors expunge translators from headlines and further permit reviewers to criticize a translation as if it were the antecedent book, they promote a poverty of translation and translators, in every sense.

RONALD CHRIST.  
446 West 20 Street, New York.

## The reign of virtue and the pursuit of equality

## Arthur Sheps

The American Revolution Two  
Hundred Years On  
Institute of United States Studies,  
University of London

American bicentennials seem to be with us always. As the *British Satirist* New York festival reminds us, 1983 is the 200th anniversary of the ending of the War of Independence. Whether the Revolution ended at the same time puzzled contemporaries and historians alike. John Adams believed that the Revolution took place in the minds and hearts of the people during the ten years before the War began. But his fellow signer of the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Rush, thought the establishment of independence was only the first stage in a revolution which had hardly begun.

To mark this bicentennial the Institute of United States Studies, University of London, with the support of the United States Information Service, held a colloquium on "The American Revolution Two Hundred Years On" on June 3, to which a number of British, American and Canadian scholars in the field were invited. Disagreement, or at least puzzlement, about the Revolution has not evaporated over the past two

centuries. Dr Edward Countryman argued in his paper "The Success of the American Revolution". This success lay in the innovative character of the events themselves and in the laying down of the base for a modern, liberal, capitalist society on a continental scale. He pointed to the democratizing mobilization of large numbers of people in the resistance efforts and military endeavours of the Revolution; the purposiveness and organization of popular activity which was different from the traditional role of the crowd in the eighteenth century; the effective politicization of popular participation and demands through the committees and congresses of the Revolution which legitimized lost grievances and interests as political goals; the transformation of social and political relations which broke old patterns of deference and led to some forced egalitarianism; and technological and entrepreneurial changes which began the commercialization and expansion of the American economy. Dr Countryman has supported this thesis in detail for New York in his *A People in Revolution*. A recent review of it in the *TLS* (February 18) by J. R. Pole (who was to chair a later session of the colloquium) noted as a virtue of the book its agreement with one of the major findings of Gordon Wood in his now classic *Creation of the American Republic* (1969). So it was puzzling to find that the next paper by Professor

Wood himself was entitled "The Failure of the American Revolution". They turned out to be talking about different groups of revolutionaries. One reviewer has criticized Dr Countryman on the grounds that the leaders and beneficiaries of the Revolution were a liberal bourgeoisie rather than the radicalized artisans Dr Countryman described. Professor Wood analysed the sense of failure felt by the leading revolutionaries and founding fathers. This group, however, did not appear to be middle-class merchants. They were a self-conscious and learned elite for whom the Revolution was an attack on artificial aristocracies, privilege and the veneration of established families. But they pursued, in their own eyes, not their own interests but a simple and virtuous republic in which an independent and disinterested American gentry (Jefferson's natural aristocracy) would govern for the sake of the public good. Consequently, they feared that the very "successes" which Dr Countryman described really meant ultimate failure. The newly-emerging merchants and spokesmen for popular interests were simply not in a position to act out of civic virtue and provide disinterested leadership. But the "new men" did not always allow a monopoly of disinterested virtue to the original revolutionary leaders. They saw that they were being asked to sacrifice their legitimate aspirations to

those who had managed to identify their own interests with the public good. Also, the inheritors of the Revolution's artisanal republicanism were later to challenge the vested interests of the powerful in the name of a common public good.

The revolutionary fathers, whatever their doubts, were sure that the Revolution was not merely a parochial event. Professor William Brock in his paper "Scotland and American Independence" examined the opinions of Adam Smith, William Robertson, Lord Kames, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Universities, lawyers and Glasgow merchants — enlightened, educated, intelligent Scots. Generally, they were pro-American although they did not approve of America's violent resistance. They believed that America was, and should be, evolving towards greater liberty and eventual independence. The British ministry ought not to have thwarted and thus provoked the Americans. But an evolving liberal society needed new leadership, and learned Scottish society had a low opinion of the self-seeking rabble which the Revolution was increasingly thrusting forward in America. The answer was a conciliatory policy, perhaps a federal union with America, which would unite its liberties and thus prevent the disruptive and risky consequences of revolutionary violence. Scottish opinion accepted independence early and easily partly because by that American leadership — here the cult of Washington was important — looked more like a group of men capable of wisdom and virtue. It was pointed out that these sentiments were a reflection of educated Lowland Scots' satisfaction with their own Union and alarm over the threat which Jacobite violence had posed to the orderly development of liberty and modernity.

In "What Happened to the Loyalists" Professor Wallace Brown surveyed the fates of the many Americans who preferred what they saw as the decency of life in the new world under the crown to the associative opportunism of the revolutionaries. Most, of course, stayed in the United States, reviled, mistreated and lost to history. The emigrants included patriots and plebeians, whites, blacks and Indians; Loyalism was not about equality but it was not defined along social lines. They provided soldiers, administrators, merchants, town builders, and rural settlers throughout the remaining empire. But their greatest impact was in the provinces that became part of today's Canada. Here, the Loyalists were ambivalent towards the Americans, still their erring cousins. They stood for the ideal of the unity of the English-speaking world, but rejected the American republic's tyrannical majorities and homogenizing uniformity.

## Man Going To The Office

After a painting by Fernando Botero

They all rush to the windows as he leaves.

Wife, child, sister-in-law and servant wave, though they might also be dismissing him, pushing him away, wiping him out of their lives with imaginary fingers, or holding palms out for their share of his alms. Now that his business-suit back is turned, they can relax: mother pours another coffee; crocheted with cream; and flicks through glossy magazines; waiting crumbs of toast; the open window suitable for sunbathing or keeping track of neighbours; the afternoon lies for an unmoored nap, when sister gardens and the infant's pudgy mouth is hushed with jelly beans.

As he bustles back through the front door at night, muttering, he will find an immaculate cloth nap, a hot meal ready. After hanging his bowler crown up, dabbing his toothbrush moustache, he will sit, enthroned, at the head of the rectangular table, exploring the topiaryed demance of poodle at his feet, throwing it rinds of meat and bread. And the ladies-in-waiting will pamper him, reprieving their impatience or stifling sneezes, careful not to poster him like clients or provoke, like inefficient secretaries, a fit of spleen.

Dennis O'Driscoll

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JOHN BAYLEY's *Shakespeare and Tragedy* was published in 1981. He is Warton Professor of English at the University of Oxford.

ALAN BELL is librarian of Rhodes House, Oxford.

DAVID BLACKBURN's books include *Class, Religion and Local Politics in Wilhelmine Germany*, 1980.

SARAH BRADFORD's *Disraeli* was published last year.

TOM CAMPBELL is Professor of Jurisprudence at the University of Glasgow, and the author of *The Left and Rights*, 1983.

LOUISE CARVER's books include *War Since 1945*, 1980.

D. K. FIELDHOUSE's books include *Economics and Empire 1830-1914*, 1973. He is a Smuts Professor-Elect of the History of the British Commonwealth at Cambridge.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS is Washington correspondent for *The Nation*.

PETER KAMP's *H. G. Wells and the Uninventing Age* was published earlier this year.

PAUL KENNEDY is the author of *The Realities behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy 1885-1980*, 1981.

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SIR JAMES LIONHILL was director of the Royal Astronomical Establishment from 1959 to 1964.

GREVILLE LINDOP's biography, *The Opium Eater: A Life of Thomas De Quincey*, was published in 1981.

KENNETH S. LYNN's most recent book, *The Air-Line to Seattle*, was published earlier this year.

ARTHUR MARMICK is Professor of History at the Open University. His most recent book is *British Society since 1945*, 1982.

WILLIAM H. MCCREA is Emeritus Professor of Astronomy at the University of Sussex.

DAVID MCKITTERICK is an Assistant Librarian at Cambridge University Library.

WILFRED MELLERS' books include *Back and the Dance of God*, 1980.

D. L. PAISLEY is a Curator at the British Library.

TONY PARKER's *The People of Providence*, a collection of tape-recorded interviews with the inhabitants of a south London housing estate, was published recently.

HAROLD PERKIN is Director of the Centre for Social History at the University of Lancaster and currently a Fellow at the National Humanities Center, North Carolina.

RICHARD POIRIER's *Robert Frost: The Work of Knowing* was published in 1978.

PATRICK POLLARD is a lecturer in French at Birbeck College, London.

SIR WILLIAM REES-MOOG was editor of *The Times* from 1967 to 1981.

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## Approaching with caution

Paul Kennedy

LEONIDAS E. HILL (Editor)

Die Weizsäcker-Papiere 1900-1932

711pp. Berlin/Frankfurt/Vienna:

Propyläen.

3 549 07625 8

In this year, the fiftieth anniversary of the Nazi seizure of power, it can come as no surprise to any reasonably intelligent person to have been bombarded by newspaper articles, books, radio programmes and television documentaries about the meaning of that fateful event. Although professional historians dislike using such words, January 1933 clearly represented a watershed, a dividing-line, a turning-point, for Germany, Europe and the world. Half a century later, the consequences of Hitler's accession are still sadly discernible - in Berlin, in Israel and in innumerable other places and ways.

Yet however decisive the *Machtergreifung* was in the longer term, most of the German people naturally went on living after 1933 in much the same way as they had before; and their social relations, their sense of history, their political culture, their ideological convictions did not, and could not change overnight. Coming to terms with the new order was therefore a lengthy process, and often an agonizing, ambivalent one for those who were neither fanatical Nazis on the one hand nor their obvious opponents on the other. Perhaps the greatest ambivalences were to be found among members of Germany's traditional élites, keen to restore their country's "rightful" place in Europe, but dubious about Hitler's methods and ultimate intentions. In such circumstances, the decision to go along with the new régime but to hope to moderate its extremism was - if not heroic - quite understandable.

This, at any rate, was the chief excuse given at the Nuremberg Trials

and elsewhere by many responsible Germans for conforming to the Nazi order and for becoming, *notens volens*, instruments of the Führer's policy of aggression. The classic example, if one may call it such, of this defence of "staying on to prevent worse from happening" was that offered by Ernst von Weizsäcker, Ribbentrop's second-in-command at the Wilhelmstrasse between 1938 and 1943. Since those years represented the key period of German expansionism, it was not surprising that Weizsäcker's arguments could not prevent him from receiving a term of imprisonment, even if it was recognized that he was in a different category from, say, leading members of the SS. And, when Weizsäcker proceeded to offer a more elaborate defence, in his own *Memoirs* (1950), he was roundly denounced by Sir Lewis Namier. Collaborators with fascism, Namier protested, could not wriggle off the hook by disingenuously pleading that they had private reservations about Hitler's aggressive policies, since they had really only worried about (say) war over Poland because of the risks of a great-power conflict.

It was predictable, therefore, that when Leonidas E. Hill produced his first volume of Weizsäcker papers a few years ago (covering, a little confusingly, the second half of Weizsäcker's career, from 1933 to 1950), his attempted rehabilitation of his subject also provoked critical reactions. Some scholars wished to query particular periods covered; thus, very recently, Rainer A. Blasius has shown how the Under-Secretary of State's attitude during the 1938-39 crises can be analysed in much more depth. But the greatest criticism was made by reviewers who felt, albeit less passionately than Namier, that Weizsäcker's attitude no way be portrayed as a member of the German resistance like, say, the Kordt brothers or Helmuth von Moltke or Stauffenberg. Despite the personal qualities of Weizsäcker - his caution, balance,

rationality, were admitted by all - and despite his private agonizing, he bears the guilt of association and collaboration. While Hill's second volume does not address these criticisms directly, it none the less is of relevance to this debate on personal responsibility. Like the previous volume, the text itself is accompanied by a succinct and useful introduction by a stupendous number of notes and by an excellent bibliography. The text consists predominantly of Weizsäcker's letters to his parents, together with diary entries for various years. The contents, it ought to be said immediately, are extraordinarily interesting and useful in their own right. As a young naval officer before 1914, Weizsäcker had many comments upon the service during the years of the Tirpitz Plan, but this volume becomes an even more valuable source for the war itself. In the autumn of 1918, for example, he was the naval representative at Army headquarters with Hindenburg and Ludendorff, and from there provides a riveting account of events from the Allied breakthroughs in the west to the armistice, naval mutinies and abdication of the Kaiser. The same is true, though at a lesser level of intensity, of Weizsäcker's letters in the 1920s, by which time he had "side-stepped" into the foreign ministry and diplomatic service, attending Geneva and elsewhere.

There is, in all of this documentation, little sign of a proto-Nazi. Although he was quite evidently a German patriot, Weizsäcker's background - from an academic, professional, recently ennobled Württemberg family - made him suspicious of Prussian militarists and pan-Germans. Within the navy, he was no supporter of Tirpitz and the Anglophobe, radical-nationalist school. To Weizsäcker, the pre-war *Flottenpolitik* was imprudent, and the wartime unrestricted U-boat campaign a folly. A compromise peace, not an annexationist victory, was the only proper solution to the stalemate of

mass destruction in which the European great powers found themselves by 1918. It was this moderation and caution, one suspects, which made it easier for Weizsäcker to adjust to the shock of military defeat and the coming of the Weimar Republic. His comments in the 1920s and early 1930s show him suspicious of the republic, of parliamentary rule and of the turbulent state of party politics; but that did not cause him to resign office and join the anti-democratic Right, about which he has some equally caustic remarks. Instead, he was merely reinforced in his belief that foreign policy - the really important part of politics, in his view - should remain in the hands of experts, diplomatic technicians like himself who sought a gradual revision of Germany's position in Europe. If the Nazi seizure of power surprised Weizsäcker, who in 1932 had thought Hitler was a fading star, then it did not cause him to alter his conviction. Adjusting to 1933 was, after all, less traumatic and turbulent than adjusting to the constitutional and political changes of 1918-20, which he had weathered quite easily.

And this is why, by a circuitous route, Professor Hill returns to answer his critics - or, at least, to answer those who thought Weizsäcker a typical Nazi, a hyper-nationalist, a collaborator of the first order. To be sure, the story of Weizsäcker's early career does not excuse his complicity in various events of 1938-1943, but it does help to explain his illusory hope of staying on to prevent worse happening. This does not make him a very admirable figure or a very imaginative politician, but it does make him a very human one; clinging to office, and reluctantly agreeing to execute unpleasant policies, are not heroic characteristics. They are, however, very human ones and perhaps especially typical of cautious, balanced bureaucrats. That is why one does not need to be a warm admirer of Weizsäcker to understand how, for him and many like him, the coming to power of the Nazis was not the world-shattering event which retrospective wisdom sees it as.

they did elsewhere. A growing proportion came from schools other than the classical Gymnasiums, and their median age rose steadily. Both of these changes reflected the diminishing proportion of nobles and sons of a self-recruiting educated middle class, while growing numbers came from business and commercial families and (especially after 1900) from the old and new lower-middle class.

Jarusch is especially good on this last phenomenon, as he is on the high number of foreign students (a prominent scapegoat during times of "over-crowding" in the professions) and on the complex reasons for their continuing under-representation of Catholics. He also discusses sensitively the tiny number of workers' sons who reached the university, and the hard-won admission of women as full students shortly before 1914. Illuminating but less familiar is his demonstration of the status hierarchy within faculties, from law down through medicine to philosophy. The latter included students of the expanding minor professions like dentistry and pharmacy, and this book has a good deal to say about the growth of professionalization.

Both the tensions and the common values within the new mass university reflected those in Imperial Germany as a whole, which was economically dynamic, socially in flux and politically segmented. Jarusch shows how the unspoken assumptions and overt political content of the curriculum, as well as the many anniversary and similar addresses he has examined, mirrored broad changes in the values of the expanded but by no means homogeneous German bourgeoisie: its retreat from liberalism after the 1870s, the emergence of a new anti-Semitism, made respectable by figures like Treitschke, the increasingly formal and conservative inflection given to the concept of humanist Bildung, and the ubiquitous presence of a broadly "political" patriotism. Students imbibed such values from

professors; and the state (at least in Prussia, on which the author concentrates) discreetly filtered out dangerously socialist or advanced liberal influences through its administrative and prebendal policies.

But, cast adrift in the mass university, students also developed their own sub-cultures. Only a minority of students were organized, it is true, and among these the Hoeray Heinrichs of the Corps, duelling and colour-carrying corporations also formed a minority. But then, exclusivity was the point. Like their adult counterparts in the officer corps, student Corps did not accept Jews, Catholics or those vulgar petty-bourgeois types marked by their "insufficient amount of social polish".

This pattern persisted through a flourishing old-boy network, although Jarusch also shows how parallel networks operated at lower levels, reinforcing the segmented patchwork of German society. The author, in addition, uncovers a revealing pattern whereby newer student organizations, whether Burschenschaften, scholarly groups, gymnastic clubs, choral societies or Catholic associations, tended to assume the customs and practices of longer-established corporations. Indeed, even the latter were less timelessly traditional than sometimes assumed, and there are valuable reflections here on the "invention of tradition", a theme which has fruitfully occupied British historians in recent years and might usefully be applied to the pseudofeudal innovations of the Kaiser's Germany.

We also learn much more about two other significant organizations. The author provides a sympathetic account of the "Freie" student movement, which worked earnestly and, to considerable everyday effect, in spheres of counselling, housing, organizing part-time work and provision of recreational opportunities. But these well-meaning forerunners of the modern AStA or

NUS remained politically impotent, liberally inclined but outside the consensus and undermined by their own nervous political minimalism. By contrast, the Pan-German Verein Deutscher Studenten was aggressively maximalist and disruptive, seeking to push the patriotic consensus in a more actively nationalist and imperialist direction. The parallel here with non-student radical nationalism, recently explored by Geoff Eley, is clear.

It is one of Jarusch's general strengths that he discusses with so much subtlety the different modalities of nationalism. He shows that it was a highly elastic idiom, capable of different meanings for Protestant and Catholic, petty bourgeois and established bourgeois, and the straight-forward ideological edge which it has been presented as by some German historians. The treatment of the corrupted legacy of humanism is equally differentiated.

This book is dauntingly but not gratuitously detailed. Theoretical issues and statistical methods are both integrated effectively into the work, and the judgments carry conviction. Apart from the odd lapse (eg, "literally exploding" enrolments) the book is also well written. It is a pity there was no room for a bibliography, but this well-produced volume is nevertheless a distinguished addition to our knowledge.

*Literature and Society in Germany 1918-1945* by Ronald Taylor (363pp. Harvester, £8.95. 0 389 20036 0). First published in 1980, this appeared in paperback. In his preface, Taylor writes: "The background is not just background - it has its dwelling within the artist's mind and soul, and is integral to his art as the religious, the aesthetic, the formal or any other dimension of his creativity which scholars may isolate for study." Most source material quoted is in English and translations of poems etc. are provided.

E. H. CARR

The Twilight of Comintern, 1930-35

461pp. Macmillan. £25.

0 353 33062 5

When Edward Hallett Carr began the writing of his *History of Soviet Russia*, he was three years older than Edward Gibbon had been when the last volume of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* appeared. Carr took thirty-three years to conclude his work, ten years longer than Gibbon. Unlike Gibbon, however, Carr did not later publish his *Memoirs* (although, according to Tamara Deutscher, he did leave "an unpublished autobiographical memoir"). Instead he published a book on the Comintern, a kind of coda to his *History* (although it is not formally incorporated in it). *The Twilight of Comintern, 1930-35* appeared shortly after Carr's death at the age of ninety.

Of course it would have been more interesting to have had his memoirs as the terminal point of Carr's grand enterprise; none the less, the publication of his last book provides an occasion to look back at his *oeuvre* in the context of his other writings. It is indeed, as so many enthusiasts have said, a work deserving of classic status, such as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* instantly achieved.

"Superb", "luminous", "masterly" were some of the adjectives used by early reviewers. One admirer, Chimen Abramsky, later suggested (in his introduction to the Festschrift in honour of Carr published in 1974) that he "will always be remembered for the monumental history of Soviet Russia".

It is indeed monumental and impressive in many respects, but one must be sceptical about its status as a classic. In my view it is a deeply flawed work, and the fact that an immense amount of labour and research went into it cannot alter the fundamental objections to Carr's approach to the subject. His perspective is rooted in a philosophy of history which all too often manifests a lack of understanding of contemporary developments, and leads to inconsistencies in his interpretation of the events and issues of our time. Underlying all this is a certain continuity of attitudes which permeate the entire body of his work, colour his writings, and even override his political persuasions; they frequently clash with some of his professed values and result in certain important shifts of emphasis in his arguments and formulations (with no retrospective admissions of misjudgment).

Gibbon's political attitudes also underwent change: he was in turn a Jacobite, a Tory, and a Whig; but Gibbon, unlike Carr who focused on the actions of rulers, was in his great work concerned with liberty, and not just with power. He argued that when Rome lost her freedoms, Roman civilization went into decline. Carr's preoccupation with power is such that, all his protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, he loses sight of the question of the outcome of the whole exercise of establishing "really existing socialism". What of the taste and texture of the Soviet omelette in the making of which so many unaimed eggs had to be broken? The reality of the outcome disappears behind an abstract formula which often combines "progressive" stereotypes with the lexicon of Soviet terminology. This point is illustrated by three sentences which furnish the summing-up of Carr's conclusions on Soviet history (from 1917: *Before and After*, 1968).

What happened in Russia in October 1917 could still be plausibly called a proletarian revolution, though not in the full Marxist sense (p. 32).

Leninism is Marxism of the epoch no longer of objective and inexorable economic laws, but of the conscious ordering of economic and social processes for desired ends (p. 10).

In the space of fifty years a primitive and backward people has been enabled to build up for itself a new kind of life and a new civilization (p. 170).

This latter judgment echoed that of Sidney and Beatrice Webb; unlike theirs, however, it was based not on a

naïve fantasy, but on solid research (and knowledge of at least another three decades of Soviet history, over half of which was in the worst period of Stalin's ruthless dictatorship). Gibbon deplored "the triumph of barbarism and religion". Carr hardly concerns himself with barbarities in his *History*. It was only long after the impact of Khrushchev and Solzhenitsyn had been felt that he began to condemn the barbarities, and then only in incidental remarks which were few and far between. ("An historian is not a hanging judge... One could hardly infer from reading Carr's *History* particularly the early volumes - that, as he put it in 1967 in his essay on "The Russian Revolution: its Place in History", "after Lenin's death, sinister developments occurred, the seeds of which had undoubtedly been sown in Lenin's lifetime..."). But he hastened to add that although "it would be wrong to minimize or condone the sufferings and the horrors inflicted on large sections of the Russian people... it would be idle to deny that the sum of human well-being and human opportunity in Russia today is immeasurably greater than it was fifty years ago". The old historical conundrum of means-becoming-ends-in-themselves is shifted by Carr from the plane of action to the realm of analysis, and the results are extolled. History is thus transmogrified into the historian's perspective with that of the ruler: it was a tendency to which Carr was always particularly prone.

But he also extolled freedom. "No history, no freedom; and conversely, no freedom, no history" (*The New Society*, 1951). His interpretation of freedom can be inferred from the following: If Soviet authorities take the view that... direct participation in the running of affairs is at least as essential an attribute of democracy as voting in occasional elections, it is by no means certain that they are wrong (*The Soviet Impact on the Western World*, 1946).

Referring to Stalin's description of the 1936 Soviet Constitution as "the only thoroughly democratic constitution in the world", Carr wrote that "it would be a mistake to dismiss such announcements as mere propaganda or humbug". He added: "It would be dangerous to treat Soviet democracy as primarily a Russian phenomenon without roots in the West or without application to Western conditions" (*Soviet Impact*, 1946). A few years later he wrote on the subject of "Western conditions": To speak today of the defence of democracy as if we were defending something which we knew and had possessed for many decades or many centuries is self-deception and sham (*New Society*).

Referring to Gibbon, Carr wrote that "the point of view of a writer is more likely to reflect the period in which he lives than that about which he writes" (*What is History?*, 1961). But for himself he developed an ingenious scheme by which to escape from the subjective relativities of time and place. It was a scheme which combined a futurist stance with a Manichaean "sociology of knowledge". The objective historian "has the capacity to rise above the limited vision of his own situation in society and in history"; he has "a long term vision over the past and over the future" (*What is History?*).

How does the historian acquire such a superior perspective? Not just - like Gibbon - by peering into the past, but by looking into the future. He has to diagnose the "historical process" and establish the "historical pattern". This pattern is "determined not so much by the historian's view of the present as by his view of the future" (*New Society*). History does not merely provide information about the past: "History acquires meaning and objectivity only when it establishes a coherent relation between past and future" (*What is History?*). Good historians, according to Carr, "have the future in their bones".

But how do they get it there? By establishing "the historical pattern". And how do they establish this "pattern"? By looking into the future

(and when they see the future, it obviously works...). Here is a circular argument if ever there was one. Clearly, although Carr declared that he did not "believe in laws of history comparable to the laws of science" (*New Society*), his "historical pattern" is related to the Hegelian *Gesetzmässigkeit* and the Leninist *zakonomnost'*. Not for him the warning of Arnaldo Momigliano: "Beware of the historian prophet!"

However, when it came to applying his superior insights into the future, or even the present, the contemporary scene, he was not very fortunate in his interpretations. His vaunted knowledge of "the future" more often than not turned out to be simply a combination of prejudices and stereotypes which only clouded his vision.

He felt confident that although "the writing of contemporary history has its pitfalls... [they are] not greater than those confronting the historian of the remote past" (*Soviet Revolution*, 1950). Theoretical propositions are matters for dispute, but did Carr avoid such pitfalls in practice? Unlike Gibbon "the moralist", he considered himself "a realist" throughout his life. But in view of his claim to be able to anticipate Clio, has she corroborated his expectations on the major issues of his time? In a recent article in the *London Review of Books* (January 20, 1983), Norman Stone reminded us that Carr moved from appeasement of Hitler to support of Stalin. This double record of wrongheadedness was not just a momentary political aberration but a matter of his substantive and enduring views on international relations and on history, with both of which his passing political positions were intimately connected. The fact that Carr's expectations were not fulfilled historically, often leaving him flat on his face, was not cause enough for him to revise his fundamental attitudes; all he did, in the end, was to blur the record. Stone is right in saying that Carr was intellectually "something of a coward". Retrospectively, he would not justify these positions, but he never admitted, in unambiguous terms, to having been wrong. He merely shifted his stance; an intellectual hubris prevented him from re-examining them explicitly.

In the case of Hitler, Carr kowtowed before the goddess of power in international relations; in the case of Stalin, he dressed her up as the goddess of history. The factor which underlay Carr's analysis throughout his life was, to paraphrase Spinoza, his *amor potestatis intellectualis*. A clear example of this is provided in *The Twenty Years' Crisis* by the arguments he marshalled to justify "Munich" of 1938: the attempt to make a moral distinction between wars of "aggression" and wars of "defence" is misguided. If a change is necessary and desirable, the use or threatened use of force to maintain the *status quo* may be morally more culpable than the use or threatened use of force to alter it. . . . Normally, the threat of war, tacit or overt, seems a necessary condition of important political changes in the international sphere. . . . "Yielding to threats of force" is a normal part of the process of peaceful change. . . . If the power relations of Europe in 1938 made it inevitable that Czechoslovakia should lose part of her territory, and eventually her independence, it was preferable (quite apart from any question of justice or injustice) that this should come about as the result of discussions round a table in Munich rather than as the result either of a war between the Great Powers or of a local war between Germany and Czechoslovakia. . . . The negotiations which led up to the Munich Agreement of September 29, 1938, were the nearest approach in recent years to the settlement of a major international issue by a procedure of peaceful change. The element of power was present. The element of morality was also present in the form of the common recognition by the Powers, who effectively decided the issue, of a criterion applicable to

the dispute: the principle of self-determination which corresponded both to a change in the European equilibrium of forces and to accepted canons of international morality. . . . In practice, we know that peaceful change can only be achieved through a compromise between the utopian conception of a common feeling of right and the realist conception of a mechanical adjustment to a changed equilibrium of forces.

Carr detected indications that "Germany and Italy are already looking forward to the time when, as dominant powers, they will acquire the vested interest in peace recently enjoyed by Great Britain and France". He thought that "since the Munich Agreement, a significant change has occurred in the attitude of the German and Italian dictators". He even stressed (apparently) an unexpected parallel:

When Herr Hitler refuses to believe that "God has permitted some nations first to acquire a world by force and then to defend this robbery with moralising theories," we have an authentic echo of the Marxist denial of a community of interest between "haves" and "have-nots," of the Marxist exposure of the interested character of "bourgeois morality". . . .

And this is Carr's description of his idea of the relationship between morality and power:

It is a basic fact about human nature that human beings do in the long-run reject the doctrine that might makes them right. Oppression sometimes has the effect of strengthening the will, and sharpening the intelligence of its victims, so that it is not universally or absolutely true that a privileged group can control opinion at the expense of the

underprivileged. As Herr Hitler says, "every persecution which lacks a spiritual basis" has to reckon with a "feeling of opposition to the attempt to crush an idea by brute force" (*Mein Kampf*). And this vital fact gives us another clue to the truth that politics cannot be defined solely in terms of power.

After this, who could accuse him of disregarding morality in politics? However, the irony of it all is that he noted in his Preface to *The Twenty Years' Crisis* the book "had reached page proof when war broke out on September 3, 1939". Its formulations could only be seen, to put it mildly, as somewhat awkward in the new context; and the unfortunate Carr could do little about it: "To introduce into the text a few verbal modifications hastily made in the light of that event would have served little purpose. . . . It took over forty years for the new edition of the book to appear and, not unjustifiably, Carr now described it as a 'period-piece'; this is surely a more accurate, if still inadequate, description than the reference to it as a "profound and subtle work" in the *London Review of Books* (March 3, 1983) by one of its defenders. In any event, this was hardly the work of a historian "who has the capacity to rise above the limited vision of his own situation in society and in history".

The case of Stalin provides another illustration of intellectual failure. Carr was no crude whitewasher of Stalin; he was, like Isaac Deutscher, a very subtle apologist. The apology never took the form of a direct denial of facts, the standard practice of Communists and "fellow-travellers" before Khrushchev's Secret Speech. Some disagreeable facts of Soviet history which were taboo in Soviet historiography were admitted and treated by Carr in his *History*. This was unlike, for instance, the Stalinist

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History of the USSR by Andrew Rothstein, published in 1950, the same year as the first volume of Carr's *History*; in his Preface, he thanked Rothstein for "valuable comments and criticisms." It was always a matter of what French Communists nowadays call "le bilan globalisé positif" of Stalin's achievement. But because his arbitrary selection of facts (Carr himself said: "The facts of history come into being simultaneously with your diagnosis of the historical process... For me the pattern of history is what is put there by the historian") and his emphasis have such a "positive" balance, Carr's work has been rightly perceived by his critics as an apology.

One has only to compare his pronouncements of the 1940s with those of the 1980s, and to contrast the first with the last volume of his *History*, to realize again how his formulations change but his attitudes persist. He concluded in *The Twenty Years' Crisis* that "a successful foreign policy must oscillate between the apparently opposite poles of force and appeasement"; this obviously was not very relevant to the new situation after the outbreak of war. But when the Germans launched their attack on the USSR, he again returned to his "oscillation", this time at the opposite pole, the appeasement of Stalin.

Was he compensating for his previous disappointment? He now went even further and made the rationalization of appeasement not just a matter of pragmatic "mechanical adjustments", but of ideological and historical necessity. As Deputy Editor of *The Times*, he developed his rationale for the Yalta policy in a series of leading articles which advocated what Professor Abramsky still, rather sanctimoniously, calls "the need for a better understanding of Russia and its rightful place in the council of nations after the war", i.e. the handing over of Eastern Europe to Stalin. (Abramsky calls these *Times* leaders "the anonymous contribution of Carr to history"; they were deliberately omitted from the bibliography of Carr's works included in the 1974 Festschrift. The "anonymous contribution to history" he made through his long association with the TLS is another story.) The rationale for this policy was based on the supposed parallel between the situations of 1915 and 1945: the great Allied powers, through their cooperation, will provide security for all after the Second World War, just as the concert of powers "guaranteed the lasting peace" after the Congress of Vienna.

Where was "the principle of self-determination" as "the element of morality" necessary to settle the fate of

the Sudeten Germans? Gone. It was no longer needed as an alibi to justify appeasement. The fate of 100 million people was to be disregarded and sacrificed to the illusory prospect of post-war harmony between the Western powers and the Soviet Union.

Carr now discovered "a healthy reaction... against the principle of self-determination." Wasn't it obsolete? He asserted emphatically that it was, that "the 'national epoch' from which the world is now emerging" is giving way to the "grassroots epoch." He felt that "the expansion of the powers and influence of great multi-national units must encourage the spread of national toleration" (*Nationalism and After*). For instance: "In the Soviet Union the predominant emphasis is laid - except in the sphere of language and culture - not on the national rights of the Kazbek republic [sic], but on the equality enjoyed by the Kazbek throughout the Union with the Uzbek or with the Great Russian." He quoted, as proof, "an emphatic enunciation of this right" in article 123 of Stalin's Constitution. According to Carr, "it was Marshal Stalin who, consciously or unconsciously usurping Woodrow Wilson's role in the previous war, once more placed democracy in the forefront of allied war aims" (*Soviet Impact*). Internally, "the degree of moral fervour for the social purposes of Soviet policy which is, according to all observers, generated among the citizens of the Soviet Union is an answer to those critics who used to argue that Marxism could never be successful because it lacked moral appeal." Comparable to the moral fervour on the home front, externally "the social and economic system of the Soviet Union, offering - as it does - almost unlimited possibilities of internal development, is hardly subject to those specific stimuli which dictated expansionist policies to capitalist Britain in the 19th century... there is nothing in Soviet policy so far to suggest that the east-west movement is likely to take the form of armed aggression or military conquest. The peaceful penetration of the Western world by ideas emanating from the Soviet Union has been, and seems likely to remain, a far more important and conspicuous symptom of the new east-west movement. *Ex Oriente Lux*."

It is only against the background of such writings, published during and immediately after the War, that one can understand not only Carr's decision to write his *History of Soviet Russia*, but the way in which he wrote it. Both his interpretations and his use of sources were affected. Leonard Schapiro summed up the positive side fairly, saying that it "contains a great deal of information assembled with consummate skill and clarity." But he added that "it tends to be overinflated by Lenin's outlook in the earlier volumes, and in general deals much more with official policies than with their effects on the population of the country."

Carr was of course only one of a number of intellectuals fascinated with power who at the time of its decline in Britain were looking with nostalgic sympathy at the rising new empire. Only a few of them, in identifying themselves with it so irrevocably, went as far as to commit actual treason. But many engaged in *la trahison des clercs*. Carr's own gigantic rationalization was to be his *History of Soviet Russia*. The first volume provided clear indications. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that, in a special note on "The Bolshevik Doctrine of Self-Determination," Marx, the staunch opponent of the Holy Alliance and an enthusiastic defender of the idea of the restoration of Polish independence, was presented as if he almost shared Carr's own premises concerning Yalta policy. In a note on "Lenin's Theory of the State," Lenin could be seen as if he were well inside a consistent follower of Carr's own ideas on the state. But this was only the beginning of what later turned out to be a more complex history "full of cunning passages."

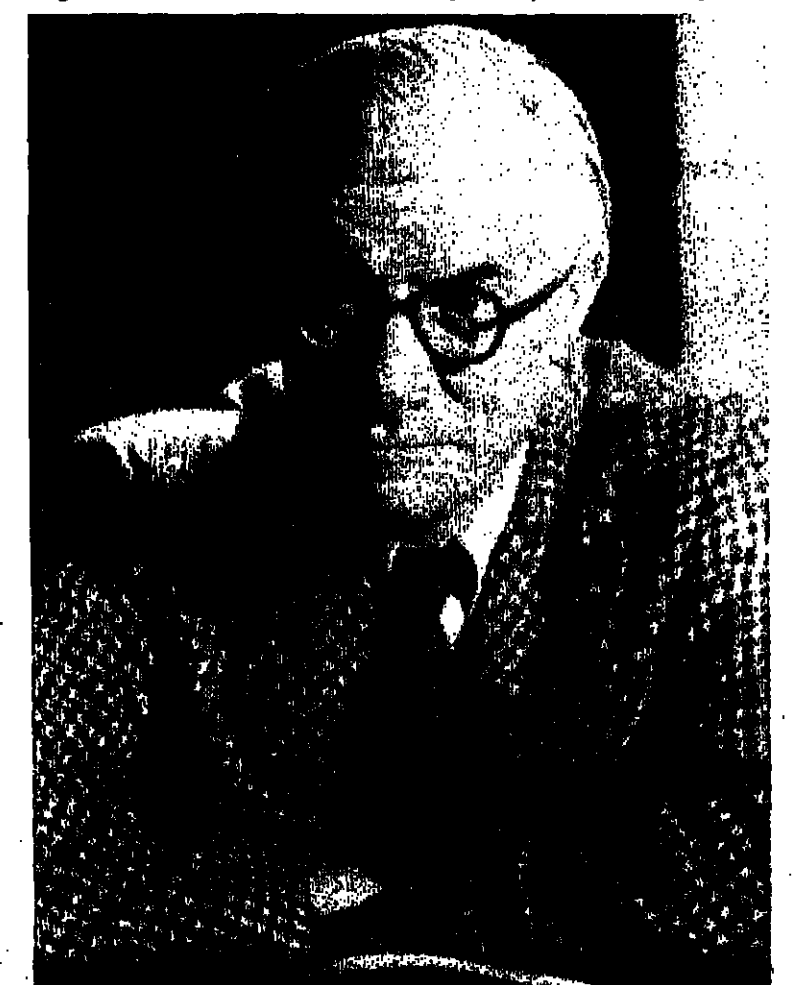
Unlike Schapiro, whose analysis of the relationship between Leninism and Stalinism has been consistently judicious, Carr found difficulty in handling the question - and there is a certain irony here. As a "realist", he tended (unlike Deutscher) to stress the element of continuity between Lenin and Stalin. He echoed Stalin's own self-justification by exaggerating his role during the early period, and criticized Trotsky but not Stalin. But after Khrushchev's famous speech

Western "progressives" went into reverse: Stalin was no longer the "Lenin of today." It was now correct to oppose the "good" Lenin to the "bad" Stalin. Once again history had played a trick on Carr.

Just as, after the outbreak of the Second World War, he had faced the bankruptcy of his pro-Munich prognosis, and after the end of the War, the crumbling of his pro-Yalta expectations of East-West cooperation, so now he faced a blow to his pro-Stalin orientation. What a cruel fate indeed for a historical "realist"! He could never really extricate himself from this situation. All the factual details which he had so carefully arranged in the earlier volumes of his

openly and brutally. Under Lenin the passage might not have been altogether smooth, but it would have been nothing like what happened. Lenin would not have tolerated the falsification of the record in which Stalin constantly indulged. If failures occurred in Party policy or practice, he would have openly recognized and admitted them as such; he would not, like Stalin, have acclaimed desperate expedients as brilliant victories. The USSR under Lenin would have never become, in Ciliga's phrase, "the land of the big lie." (*From Napoleon to Stalin*).

This is almost too much from an author whose record on the subject is conspicuously less than impressive.



E. H. Carr

*History* - especially his discretion with regard to Stalin (sometimes bordering on *omissio veri et suggestio falsi*) - were now undermined. As with *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, there was little the unfortunate Carr could do about it. "The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ, Moves on..." He was in the middle of the way; and his pride and academic propriety, not to mention ideological commitment, forbade any drastic revisions. A subtle, barely detectable, shift did take place; but the de-Stalinization of the general public's perception of Soviet history was not quite matched by a "de-suprematization" in his *History*. It was seventeen years after the publication of the first volume before he made a truly critical reference to the Stalin period: it appears in the eighth volume, on page 451. (The reference was still veiled, however. He referred to "the darkest period of Soviet experience" without invoking Stalin's name. A defender of Carr in the *London Review of Books* [February 17, 1983] used a garbled quotation from this page of *History* to prove that "Carr was surprisingly articulate when it came to describing Stalin's extreme brutality and indifference to personal dictatorship".)

We had to wait another eleven years to hear Carr - who only in 1961 first referred (in *What Is History?*) to "the grim consequences of the 'cult of personality' - speak plainly on the subject (in a 1978 interview in the *New Left Review*). "Somewhat incongruously," he said, "the cold war writers who merely want to blacken Lenin with the sins of Stalin" and "the long blindness of this left intellectual in the West to the repressive character of the regime." This was, surely, a breathtaking remark from a man who had done so much to foster this blindness. No reader of Carr's *History* could have inferred what he was now saying in the *New Left Review*.

Stalin had no moral authority whatsoever (later he tried to build it up in the cruder ways). He understood nothing but speculation and from the first employed this

For example, he explained in the Preface to his *History* that he used the second edition of Lenin's works throughout "in preference to the still incomplete fourth edition which omits nearly all the full and informative notes." But what he failed to say was that this omission was due to the systematic re-writing of history in "the Stalinist school of falsification" (although he mentioned this title of a book by Trotsky elsewhere in a footnote to the *History*). This was a lack of candour not characteristic of his handling of other official documents which he used, more or less critically. One has to agree with Norman Stone when he says of the *History* that Carr "never quite said what he meant", but "covered his tracks and never drew recognizable conclusions".

Carr's sympathies were obviously with Stalin, not Trotsky. But when after "de-Stalinization" Carr suffered a major reversal *in mezzo del cammin*, he began to develop a more sympathetic attitude towards Trotsky, presumably as compensation for his earlier enthusiasm for Stalin, and praised him, whereas earlier he had stressed his defects. In 1974 he wrote approvingly that "on one point his credentials are beyond cavil or challenge... He was the supreme adversary of Stalin and of everything Stalin stood for." (*From Napoleon to Stalin*). In his last book, in a special note on "Trotsky and the Rise of Hitler", he stated that "both Trotsky's 'diagnoses and his foresight [on this point] were astonishingly acute." *C'est le ton qui fait la chanson*, a new tone was introduced into his previous "objectivity"; it could not have been due to his friendship with Deutscher alone.

In her "Personal Memoir" of Carr (*New Left Review*, January-February 1983), Tania Deutscher described the intellectual friendship of the two:

At first sight their personal amity might seem puzzling: on one side, a self-educated former member of the Polish Communist Party - Marxist by conviction, Jewish by origin - who was a refugee from Hitler and

Stalin stranded in London; and, on the other side, an English historian who was an unmistakable product of Cambridge, a former member of the Foreign Office, schooled in a diplomatic service famous as a bastion of British traditionalism.

Since Castor and Pollux, and Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, there have been few such unusual pairs. It was not just a question of the differences in their backgrounds - Edwardian in one case, Talmudic in the other; the one an appeaser of Hitler and Stalin, the other a refugee from them. They had reached their shared "progressive" views via very different routes (and their views did remain different in certain respects, in spite of their common faith in the Soviet Union and pro-Soviet attitude).

Carr, although he claimed to be a "realist", was no Sancho Panza - he was not able to see the windmills for what they were. Even though towards the end of his life he came closer to recognizing them, he still believed in "progress", and it consisted for him in the replacement of what he called "capitalism" with what he called "socialism." He approved of the direction of labour in the East and also advocated it for the West (*New Society*). He believed that "Marx was by temperament and by conviction the sworn enemy of utopianism in any form" (*Soviet Impact*). But he also wrote early in his career that "the dream of an international proletarian revolution has faded" (*Nationalism*) and that "those who believe in world revolution as a short cut to utopia are singularly blind to the lessons of history" (*The Twenty Years' Crisis*). In his last years he came to the conclusion that "the Russian Revolution, whatever good ultimately came out of it, caused endless misery and devastation"; that "the dictatorship of the proletariat, however one interpreted the phrase, was a pipe-dream"; and that Trotsky's "testament" (in which he had expressed some doubt as to the capacity of the proletariat to become the ruling class) had proved to be the correct verdict (*From Napoleon to Stalin*). All this did not prevent him, to the end, from complaining about the spirit of carping hostility still characteristic of some Western writers about the revolution... the dull and grudging belittlement of its achievements in many current Western accounts" (*1917: Before and After*).

Deutscher, the revolutionary romantic, was even less of a Sancho Panza and he was no Don Quixote either. Like Carr, he lacked the moral sensitivity of the Knight of Rueful Countenance. He was a utopian "true believer" who continued to exult "pristine Marxism", and who believed that, at any moment, the Soviet economy would overtake the Western economy and that a democratization of the Soviet Union was just around the corner. He predicted that the Goddess of Liberty would soon be moving East. In particular, Deutscher rejected as "hyperbole" the doubts expressed in Trotsky's "testament". He supported Trotsky's old idea, the so-called "Thermidor thesis", which postulated that the USSR was still a workers' state with no ruling class, and that the workers have only to eliminate the "bureaucratic distortions" of Stalinism in order to reveal the path to genuine socialism.

It is interesting to see how these two Marxist-inspired authors used the historical documents pertaining to this crucial question. In his review of the second volume of Deutscher's biography of Trotsky, Carr was full of extravagant praise; and he wrote (1977):

In endless correspondence with other members of the opposition in exile in other parts of eastern Russia and... Siberia... notably with Rakovsky, Preobrazhensky and Radek - Trotsky could assert without equivocation the positions which he had failed to defend consistently during the troubled years in Moscow... By and large, the letters of the Alma Ata period now revealed for the first time from the rich storehouse of the Trotsky Archives in Harvard - are, in intelligence, at grips, without the compromises and inhibitions of the middle 1920s, with the baffling problems of the revolution. By the same token, this is rewarding ground for the biographer... Drawing on the unpublished materials of the Archives, he [Deutscher] has given a

memorable analysis of the dilemma of Trotsky and of the revolution.

And in the Preface to the second volume of his own *History*, Carr thanked Deutscher for putting at his "disposal the notes made by him of the unpublished Trotsky Archives". What he was presumably unaware of was the way in which Deutscher had used the material on the "Thermidor thesis" from the archives.

As I have since established, Deutscher simply omitted to use a revealing document in the Trotsky Archives - a document which, as it happens, did not fit his ideological stance. I refer to a letter from Trotsky in reply to Karl Radek's criticism of the "Thermidor thesis". The relevant part of the letter reads as follows (Trotsky Archives, T3125):

On the theses of comrade Radek, 17 July 1928 [p. 3, note 18] Radek's theses on the problem of the Thermidor say quite unexpectedly: "It will not analyse here the question of whether the analogy between the Russian and the French revolution is applicable." What does this mean? ... What is the above-mentioned doubt about the applicability of the analogy between the Russian and French revolutions? Are we perhaps sitting in the society of Marxist historians, debating the problems of historical analogies in general? No. We are conducting a political struggle in which we have used the analogy with the Thermidor hundreds of times together with the author of the [present] theses. Analogies should be taken within the strict limits of the ends for which they are being made...

It is not difficult to see why Deutscher omitted reference to this letter. Were he to have published it, the whole ideological edifice of his biography of Trotsky would have been undermined - by the revelation that Trotsky himself did not take seriously the analogy on which the "Thermidor thesis" was built; that he was simply using it as an instrument in the political struggle, leaving it to the Marxist historians (such as Deutscher) to decide whether or not the analogy is basically correct and truly applicable. Deutscher presumably chose not to report the contents of this letter because it would have spoiled his historical analysis and marred his political optimism. These he had based on a seductive analogy, the true appropriateness of which, it appears, left Trotsky indifferent.

How might Carr have reacted to such a disclosure? It could well have accelerated his slow and inconsistent disenchantment and, perhaps, have helped him to realize that his approach to Soviet history, which he shared with Deutscher, was not likely to make his *History* a monument *ae reus*.

It has often been pointed out that Carr's decision to end his *History* with the year 1929 was a peculiar one indeed for a historian of the Soviet Union. He defended it on the grounds that, by that date, *Foundations of Leninism* (the title of the last six volumes of his work) had already been laid down and the institutional structure of the regime established; and that, after that date, "reliable contemporary material" was no longer available. But in the Preface to *The Twilight of Comintern* he writes that "thirty years later these arguments need to be qualified", that "what happened in the USSR in the 1930s grew without a break out of what happened in the 1920s. Nor is the documentary landscape as bleak as it seemed in 1930."

The reasons adduced are transparent rationalizations. The real motives for Carr's decision could have been other than his unwillingness to confront the reality of Stalinism (Russia with his "positive" assumptions (quoted above) about the historical accomplishment of the Bolshevik Revolution. These were assumptions with which he had begun the writing of his *History*, and which he would not abandon in spite of the intellectual difficulties he increasingly had to face in his attempt to salvage of them what he could.

It is true that the year 1929 (which Stalin himself called the "year of the great breakthrough") was an important date in Soviet history: the end of NEP, the beginning of industrialization, "at breakneck speed", and the impending introduction of forced collectivization made it a turning-point. The totally centralized state already in existence,

soon became the sole employer, thereby extending immeasurably the network of its control. But this process - and Carr was not enough of a Marxist to believe in economic determinism; he believed rather in the priority of politics - was started with Lenin and continued under Stalin in the 1930s. Institutionally, the system pre-dated Stalin and has continued unchanged until the present day. But Stalin further consolidated its specific features. The imprint of his policies was not just a personal one, although the extent of mass terror (with all its horrific consequences) was undoubtedly shaped by his personality. In this sense, as Adam Ulam has pointed out, "there could have been no Stalinism without Stalin."

But Carr, who at the end of his career at last made open reference to Stalin's special contribution to the Grand Guignol of Soviet history, chose to disregard historical continuity. He refused to deal with the period of Stalin's "high performance" in the 1930s and only dealt finally with the Russian and the French revolution is applicable." What does this mean? ... What is the above-mentioned doubt about the applicability of the analogy between the Russian and French revolutions? Are we perhaps sitting in the society of Marxist historians, debating the problems of historical analogies in general? No. We are conducting a political struggle in which we have used the analogy with the Thermidor hundreds of times together with the author of the [present] theses. Analogies should be taken within the strict limits of the ends for which they are being made...

Whatever one's view of the positive achievements of Carr's *History*, the very fact that it comes to a halt at the brink of the era of high Stalinism undermines its value for the understanding of Soviet history. Leonard Schapiro's *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, or Bertram Wolfe's *Three Who Made a Revolution*, are better guides to an understanding of Soviet affairs. With all his factual knowledge and his immense diligence, Carr lacked comparable grasp and insight. He never acquired a genuine feel for his subject. He tended to confine himself to formulations and of ideological formulas which always concealed, rather than revealed, real Soviet life. Not for him Marx's favourite quotation from Goethe: "Gras ist die Theorie".

An illustration of Carr's lack of what the Germans call *Fingerspitzengefühl* is his introduction to the so-called *Livorno Diaries*, a forgery which Wolfe spotted immediately and exposed as such. The lack of understanding displayed on this occasion by Carr, the hapless "expert", did not enhance his credibility as an interpreter of Soviet matters in general.

The other reason that Carr offered for ending his *History* in 1929 - the paucity of "reliable contemporary material" - appears also to be a lame excuse. After 1956, as he himself admitted, "many documents have been published, as well as crucial articles, by writers having access to party and Soviet archives". He always preferred to use official documents, but anyway this cannot be a *conditio sine qua non* for the writing of Soviet history. The greatest difficulty is not getting hold of reliable material about what is going on in the Soviet Union, but the ability to distinguish between the reality of the official façade and the "real reality". Carr never quite mastered that particular art. It is for this reason that his *History* is unlikely to survive.

One suspects that ideological difficulties may also be responsible for the thematic meanderings and convoluted construction of the *History*. Carr was a writer who on the whole commanded a style of supreme lucidity; he was gifted with an ability to summarize complicated material and had a talent for producing clear précis. Yet in his *History*, unlike the graceful early books *The Romantic Exiles* and *Bakunin*, he is often muscle-bound. The style is at times stilted and the structure of the whole work is so disjointed and weighed down with digressions that it must be very difficult for the general reader to get a clear overall picture. The last two volumes (13 and 14) scarcely deal with Soviet history itself, but, as I have mentioned, are used (under the irrelevant title *Foundations of a Planned Economy*) for an examination of the policies of "foreign" Communist parties and their

relations with Moscow. The present volume, *The Twilight of Comintern*, is the logical extension, and there would seem to be no reason why it should not have been included (as Volume 15) with the previous volumes - except, of course, that this would have been a violation of Carr's rationale for the magical date of 1929 as the *terminus ad quem* of his *History*. But in effect he violated this himself in the last three volumes.

*The Twilight of Comintern* is, then, a collection of short histories of various Communist parties between 1929 and 1935, when the Party line changed from the harsh extremism of the "theory of social fascism" to the duplicity of more amenable Popular Front tactics. Analytically, it is more critical than Carr's previous writings on the subject; but it still does not convey with sufficient vividness the stolidity and servility of Stalin's foreign accomplices. It relies, again, largely on the texts of official documents, and it attempts to decipher the doctrinal jargon which here (as elsewhere in the *History*) defeats Carr's own lucid style.

I find it curious that Carr does not even mention Franz Borkenau's book on the *Communist International*, published in 1938, which Carr himself praised highly in *The Twenty Years' Crisis*. Of course, Borkenau did not have at his disposal the additional material which accrued in the subsequent four decades; but in my view his book is analytically the better of the two.

In spite of its fame and prestige, most Western historians of Soviet affairs tend to ignore Carr's *History*. Nor, unsurprisingly, is it quoted or referred to in official Soviet publications. Soviet dissidents (Roy Medvedev included) do not mention Carr in their works. The official guardians of Soviet history in the Soviet Union are not happy about Carr because in point of fact he rummages in too many of their "memory holes". They cannot afford to be as cynically "objective" as he, for this would undermine Soviet legitimacy. Like Carr, they can always predict "the future" with ease; but they find it even more difficult to predict their ever-changing past.

Soviet dissidents understandably dislike Carr because his historicism appears to them only a thinly veiled rationalization of the power of their oppressors. They know - contrary to the Hegelian formula of which Carr approved (*What Is History?*, p100) - that what is real is not necessarily rational. They do not need to read Pasternak or Solzhenitsyn, Akhmatova or Mandelstam, Shalamov or Ginzburg, in order to comprehend this; they have the past "in their bones".

Ultimately, however, the reasons for Carr's failure do not lie merely in his lack of understanding of the Soviet experience, but in his approach to history in general.

In *What Is History?* he rather sneered at Isaiah Berlin for his concern with moral assessments in history: "Sir Isaiah Berlin... is terribly worried by the prospect that historians may fail to denounce Genghis Khan and Hitler as bad men. The bad King John and the Good Queen Bess theory is especially ripe when we come to more recent times..." One wonders why Carr mentioned Hitler but not Stalin. Presumably because this is the latter-day Carr, the author of *The History of Soviet Russia*, rather than the Carr who wrote *The Twenty Years' Crisis*.

Gibbon compared five good emperors with five bad ones. What would Carr's *History* have been like if his subject had been not Stalin (Pasternak's "pock-marked Caligula"), but Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, Vitellius, or Domitian (and particularly if Carr had been writing as a contemporary)? Confronted with the problem of the limited terror of the Roman emperors, he most certainly would not have been overconcerned with what Gibbon called the "exquisite sensibility of the sufferers". He would probably have used imperial edicts as his main sources, and would have taken at face value their republican terminology, analysing meanings only in terms of what they implied for the power of the rulers concerned.

To compare Carr's approach with Gibbon's is to register the contrast between his moral indifference and Gibbon's human concern, his blinkered pedantry and Gibbon's sovereign achievement in the sifting and validation of evidence.

Carr might have learnt his "realism" about power from Machiavelli. Both stressed that rulers must take into account the moral sentiments of the populace; but Carr saw power to an even greater degree as an exercise in the manipulation of such sentiments. He was not, however, a very thorough pupil: his "realism" was often just a mask for his illusions. In the *Discourses*, Machiavelli wrote that "the great majority of mankind is satisfied with appearances, as if they were realities, and is more often influenced by things that seem than by those that are..." More often than not, Carr was among the ranks of those who are "satisfied with appearances". Indeed, he perpetuated the Soviet myth in the name of "realism".

He was the spiritual product of an earlier era, and in effect he transposed the faith of an Edwardian "progressive" on to Marxist "progressivism". His generation witnessed the collapse of Victorian Britain and experienced the trauma of the First World War. He reacted by rejecting "moralism" and over-investing in the new future.

Did he ever really come to grips with the twentieth century, and was this not at the root of his failure to understand Soviet Russia? In an article published posthumously (*The Guardian*, February 7, 1983), he confessed:

I must be one of the very few intellectuals still writing who grew up not in the high noon but in the afterglow of the great Victorian age of faith and optimism and it is difficult for me even today to think in terms of a world in permanent and irrevocable decline. He still thought of himself as "a moderate optimist"; but this seemed more like compensation and posturing than real conviction. Paradoxically, in the context of the appalling tragedies of the twentieth century, Carr's *History* is, on the whole, a comedy of errors. He tried so hard and so long to be historically "with it". His writings are replete with dogmatic judgments about "outmoded" beliefs. How frantically this nineteenth-century man strove to be "modern"! This was an adjective he used constantly, turning it into an ideological shibboleth, a litmus test of right and wrong.

Accordingly, Carr had little real feeling for the transitoriness of things in human history, which is the mark of true historical sensibility and which gives a really great historian his historical perspective. Even in his eighth and ninth decades Carr never abandoned his obsessive preoccupation with what he imagined to be "modernity"; he thus trivialized his vision by making his postulated (and illusory) future the measure of all things. How much wiser was La Bruyère, who reflected on the occasion of the first dispute about "modernity": "Nous qui sommes si modernes, serons anciens dans quelques siècles."

To judge from various remarks that he made before his death, Carr died a disillusioned man, although to the last he tried to put a brave face of declaratory optimism on his disenchantment. Although some of his writings remain impressive, he is unlikely to survive as Gibbon has. His futurological gnosticism made it inevitable that his *History* would be overtaken by history. In fact this has already happened.

But in the essay of 1967 on "The Russian Revolution: its Place in History", he implicitly contradicted these assertions (of 1946): "The need, with which Lenin wrestled and which Stalin contemptuously dismissed, of reconciling elite leadership with mass democracy has emerged as a key problem in the Soviet Union today." "Writing in 1974 about Bukharin, he praised him for having 'rendered honourable service in the campaign against Hitler' (between 1934 and 1936); but he castigated him for being 'less impressively one of the principal authors of the famous Stalin Constitution of 1936' (From *Napoleon to Stalin*, 1980).

Carr's co-author, R. W. Davies, has now posed the following question: "Should we look for more fundamental weaknesses in the political and economic assumptions about the transition to socialism shared by Trotsky and Stalin - and perhaps also by Lenin and Marx?" (*The Debate on Industrialization*, in *Penelope's estate*, political ed. by Lev Trotsky, Francesca Gori, ed. by Florence Osipchik, 1982, Volume 1, 1985).

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The Oxford Illustrated Literary Guide to the United States may not always have a very exciting notion of literature, but it has a great deal to tell us about the United States. Its prime function is that of a dictionary (1,527 authors in all) that doubles as a gazetteer (1,586 localities of one kind or another). But it also presents itself as a family album containing maps and photographs and memorabilia and long rambling quotations (some of which seem intended as much to warn as to seduce). Though punctilious in their treatment of the big cities and their more celebrated inhabitants, Eugene Ehrlich and Gorton Carruth also extend an even-handed hospitality to many authors whose sole glimpse of immortality this book may well be.

America is shown here to be a country of transients. The great stay-at-homes - among them Wallace Stevens in Hartford, Connecticut, and William Carlos Williams in Rutherford, New Jersey - are duly recorded. But they are outnumbered a hundred times over by authors who seem to have lived in an antlike state of almost perpetual locomotion: there is almost not only of writers like Jack Kerouac, for whom vagabondage was fundamental, but also of those who merely followed the national impulse to pick up and move on if things did not suit them where they were. To have turned up in twenty or more different localities is nothing unusual in this *Guide*. We are also reminded that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the printed word was the prime distraction of hundreds of thousands of people, many an author who today might well be dependent on local security lived well and piled up a fortune. Many an author had moreover

a local reputation that is still kept alive by an archivist, sometimes paid but more often not. Their work may be difficult to find, let alone to read, but they are right here in the *Oxford Guide*.

Where else, for instance, should we expect to read, and where else should we be expected to care, that "Opie Read was editor of a newspaper in Conway, Arkansas, in the late 1870s"? Or that in Norman, Oklahoma, Lynn Rigg in the summer of 1922 "wrote his first play, *Cuckoo*, but it was never published"? Or that Kelley's Island in Lake Erie appeared as "Hazard Island" in the novel *Signature of Time* (1949) by Walter Havighurst? Yet entries of this order are not a waste of space, or of the reader's time. They remind us of the vast loneliness of America, and of many Americans, and of the eagerness with which people will reach out for something that links them, however remotely, to a credible past. There is a perennial America that never gets into the news, and it is an America of local loyalties, in which people will drive long distances to see The Old Oakens Bucket Homestead in Scituate, Massachusetts, for the sake of a poet called Samuel Woodworth, and pay good money to see Edgar Allan Poe's mirror and trinket-box in the Poe Museum in Richmond, Virginia. Who is to despise such allegiances, and how many authors now living can hope to command them?

Still, we are entitled to ask of a literary guide that it should tell us exactly where we can go that will truly enhance our understanding of our favourite writers, as distinct from outuring a forgivable fetishism. In that context the editors of the *Guide* have some very good moments. It is of interest, for example, to know that Andalusia Farm, near Millersville, Georgia, is much as it was when Flannery O'Connor lived and wrote her stories there. It is worth while to know that the central image in Walt Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" was given to Whitman by the naturalist John Burroughs when they were both living in Washington, DC. Given the stature of Marianne Moore in her later years,

it is worth knowing when we pass through Carlisle, Pennsylvania, that in the first years of our century she taught arithmetic, stenography and commercial law at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Tom Paine's cottage in New Rochelle, New York, may have been moved from its original site, but it is affecting to stand before the room in which an unidentified malcontent shot at Paine on Christmas Eve, 1804. And as for the Dashiell Hammett enthusiast, he will read of no fewer than five relevant sites in San Francisco.

But in general the prospects for a guide such as this are diminished not only by the tendency of Americans to pack up and move, but by their tendency to pull down and start all over again. Every novel about a big American city has become a historical novel by the time it gets into the bookstores, so rapidly do landmarks vanish. As much can be said of whole streets, long-settled ethnic patterns, rational systems of transport and well-developed manners of speech. What can the title of John O'Hara's *Butterfield 8* mean to someone who has never seen an old-fashioned telephone, let alone an old-fashioned directory of Manhattan?

This is the rationale behind the early photographs, the scratchy little engravings and the seemingly inconsequential quotations that between them preserve something in this *Guide* of the times in which so much of American literature was first set before an eager audience. If the *Guide* does better in this context by the smaller towns, and by the countryside, than by the big cities it is because there is really no way to present the cultural, geographical and architectural leaps and counter-leaps of a city like New York unless priorities are stricter and more radical than those that rule here - lists are not enough.

It should also be said that the *Guide* is marked by some astonishing omissions. In a book that lists every last editor, columnist, sermonizer and pulp novelist throughout the length and breadth of an enormous country, room should surely have been found for Thomas Jefferson? Or is his role in the "Declaration of Independence" not enough to qualify him as a literary man

- the equal, let us say, of Badger Clark, the cowboy laureate? Yet Jefferson's house at Monticello goes unmentioned in the *Guide*. Nor is the university that he designed in Charlottesville, Virginia, credited to him in any way.

Other entries, or multiple entries, are mysteriously incomplete. It is not mentioned that, for example, both Thomas Mann and Aldous Huxley lived in California, though their sojourns there were of great importance to them. As for B. B. White (who is regarded by many as the foremost living master of American English), there is no sign in the *Guide* that he has ever been to Maine, though he has lived there for many years and written about it in ways that once read are never forgotten. In the end, however, it is the outright omissions that rankle and exasperate. The editors have caught Stenon's five-year sojourn in Lakeville, Connecticut, but we are entitled to be amazed that although Marguerite Yourcenar's long residence in Maine was brought to world-wide notice when she was elected to membership of the Académie Française it finds no echo here. Jonathan Williams - poet, publisher, critic and essayist - has his headquarters in Highlands, North Carolina, and has produced from time to time what are in effect long fragments of a literary guide vastly more searching than this one, but he passes unnoticed.

If this is a guide to the literary life as it has been led at every level, and by men and women who were variously gifted and ungifted, important and unimportant, exalted or ridiculous, then it can be defended. But if it is meant to be a dictionary of the brightest and the best among those who have spent much of their time as writers, then a far more stringent criterion of quality should have been invoked. There is something very silly about a literary guide that has no room for John Ashbery among poets, for Guy Davenport among story-tellers, for R. Buckminster Fuller among visionary designers, for George F. Kennan among wise heads and elegiac autobiographers, and for Lincoln Kirstein on dance, photography, poetry, sculpture and whatever else catches his attention.

ROBERT J. HIGGS

**Laurel & Thorn: The Athlete in American Literature**  
196pp. University of Kentucky Press.  
08131 14128

**CHRISTIAN K. MESSENGER**  
*Sport and the Spirit of Play in American Fiction: Hawthorne to Faulkner*  
369pp. Columbia University Press.  
\$24.  
0231 051689

From the dawn of time, the "hero" seems always to have been an athlete. Gilgamesh out-wrestling Enkidu to prove who was strongest in Uruk is by no means a unique example. Perhaps the only *trait d'union* between the heroes of the two great Homeric epics is their common respect for sport. And Greek mythology reads like a veritable roster of champions: Herakles, Pelops, Theseus, Hippolytus and Atalanta to name but a few.

But with rare exceptions - like Euripides' *Heracles*, in which the hero's struggle to regain the will to live becomes a symbolic thirteen-labour - the athleticism in Greek myths is usually not invested with "deeper meanings". In post-biblical literature by contrast, Job is constantly depicted as wrestling against Satan. As one would expect, the devil tries numerous dirty tricks, but God's champion never capitulates. One need not read John Chrysostom's version to be able to draw the moral. But with such religious exceptions (the apostle Paul's Olympic imagery being another), European athletic mythology tends to remain more muscular than metaphorical.

America is quite different, perhaps because it lacks an epic heritage. Though even Britain can boast that, thanks to Brute, London was once called Troy Novant, no ancestor of George Washington is known to have fought at Ilion. The closest New World equivalent of Greeks & Trojans is Harvard against Yale. Indeed a whole sub-literature of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century celebrates worthies in football-helmets like Frank Merriwell and Dink Stover. Their gridiron exploits on behalf of *alma mater* elevated Yale to a mythic status akin to Camelot for thousands of readers who hadn't the slightest notion where New Haven actually was.

This fact has more than mere anecdotal significance. For Dink Stover's ruminations (recorded by Owen Johnson in *Stover at Yale*, 1911) in the midst of a Yale-Princeton clash encapsulate the peculiar nature of sport in the American mentality.

For the first time, a little appalled, he felt the weight of the seriousness,

the deadly seriousness of the American spirit, which seizes on everything that is competition and transforms it, with the savage fanaticism of its race for success.

Herein lies an essential difference with the European literary attitude. The Homeric heroes remain honoured champions even in old age. Nestor pointedly reminds everyone of his sporting exploits in days gone by; Agamemnon is hailed as a man who could win any event he chose to enter. Whereas in European literature athletic achievement is a synonym for heroism, in America it is, as Dink Stover sensed, a mere prelude.

And more often than not the winner at games proves to be a loser in later life, his former glory serving as a painful reminder of how far he has fallen. Contrast the final moments of the wounded charioteer Hippolytus, or Housman's eulogy for the athlete dying young, with the paradigmatically American situation of the protagonist in Irwin Shaw's "The Eighty Yard Run": a middle-aged man, Bunyan, stands forlornly in the college football stadium, where long ago he had performed brilliantly. But everything thereafter had gone wrong. Hence his return to the scene of his youthful triumph.

Here he was on a playing field that was fifteen years away and his wife was in another country having dinner with another and better man, speaking with him a different, new language, a language nobody had ever taught him.

This is poignantly restated in Robert Lowell's "Waking in the Blue", where the poet looks at one of his fellow inmates in the sanatorium:

I grin at Stanley, now sunk in his slacks, once a Harvard All-American full-back, (if such were possible)... more cut off from words than a seal. Those who claim America is the land of success have not studied its literature closely. For while in the European quest Jason returns in triumph with the Golden Fleece, Ahab perishes in his futile attempt to capture Moby-Dick. The American protagonists are the precise opposites of Housman's hero. They are "runners whom renown outran/And the name died before the man".

Budd Schulberg's *What Makes Sammy Run?* is regarded as the ultimate expression of America's adoration of the Bitch Goddess Success. But another of his novels perhaps says it even better: *The Harder They Fall* (1947), ostensibly about boxing, is in fact a parable of aspiring American youth ultimately bowing its head to failure. It contains an almost lyrical description of American type, when its press-agent protagonist philosophizes about the boxing match

he is promoting. It is, of course, to be the greatest ever.

Nick had the money. I had the tricks. And the American people, God bless them, had the credibility. You couldn't blame them entirely. They were a little punchy too. They had taken an awful pasting from all sides: radio, the press, billboards, throwaways, even airplanes left white streamers in the sky telling them what to buy and what to need. They could really absorb punishment, this nation of radio listeners and the shop-happy consumers, this great spectator nation. Only like the game fighter who smiles when he gets hit and keeps boxing in for more, they were a little more vulnerable for every encounter.

Ironically, the narrator himself proves to be just as deluded as the public he thinks he is deceiving.

It is also worth noting how frequently American authors have their characters speak of the success ethic in terms of sport. Arthur Miller's Salesman ("He had all the wrong dreams") tells his two sons:

Bernard can get the best marks in school 'y'understand, but when he gets out in the business world 'y'understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I thank Almighty God you're both built like Adonises.

The two books under review reflect America's growing awareness of the unique role sport plays in its life and literature. They are both serious and ambitious efforts, though Robert J. Higgs's *Laurel & Thorn* is rather weighed down by jargon and procrustean typologies. He argues that the athletes in (twentieth-century) American literature fall into three categories: "Apollonian", "Dionysiac" and "Adonic".

Whereas both Apollo and Dionysus figures are generally unattractive, those of the final "Adonis" mould are more sympathetic and more interesting. "Adonic" types include the folk hero, or the natural (rural and urban), the cripple, the absurd athlete and the 'secret' Christian. They are the rebels with a cause and in some cases the crucified: those caught in a divided world between culture and nature. Among the persuasive examples Higgs offers are Nebraska Crane in Thomas Wolfe's *The Web and the Rock* and "Ted Coy" (a Yale All-American fullback). But Fitzgerald then developed a violent antipathy to this character - specifically to the New Haven specimen, Witness, his unflattering portraits of Yale athletes Tom Buchanan in *Gatsby* and Dink Diver in *Tender is the Night*. (Though Messenger ingeniously ferrets out covert allusions in Fitzgerald's characters' names, he seems to

figure, contrasted with the crippled intellectual, more of a 19th-century type.) Higgs forces some of his arguments a bit, and the book is weakened by hypertrophied prose and a general tendency to moralize. One of its assets, however, is a wealth of unusual perspectives by unlikely observers. For example, Virginia Woolf on Ring Lardner:

Mr. Lardner's interest in games has solved one of the most difficult problems of the American writer: it has given him a clue, a centre, a meeting place for the divers activities of people whom a vast continent isolates, whom no tradition controls. Games give him what society gives his English brother... In America there is baseball instead of society.

Christian K. Messenger's *Sport and the Spirit of Play* is a more substantial and penetrating study. To begin with, he deals with all American fiction, paying significant attention to the "more popular literature" which Higgs deliberately excludes. Messenger distinguishes three evolutionary phases in the fictional portrayal of the American athlete. First there is the "Popular Sports Hero", frontiersmen like Davey Crockett and Mike Fink, whose legendary exploits were the stuff of the nineteenth-century almanacs, from which emerged the dime novel, and ultimately, Ring Lardner. Thereafter comes the "School Sports Hero", a curious and moving literary reaction to the trauma of the nation during the Civil War. Battlefield carnage is sublimated into noble (but not fatal) strife on the playing-field. This phase begins with Stephen Crane and culminates (with a little help from Tom Brown of Oxford) in the widely popular serialized tales of those parit New Haven knights, Frank Merriwell and Dink Stover.

Messenger is especially illuminating when he discusses Scott Fitzgerald's strongly ambivalent reaction to this figure. His earliest stories, and indeed his first novel, show an intoxication with the pulp football star. The rhapsodic prose of *This Side of Paradise* even gives him new stature. Here is Amory Blaine fantasizing of football glory: "For those minutes courage flowed like wine out of the November dusk, and he was the eternal hero, one with the sea-rover on the prow of a Norse galley, one with Roland and Horatius, Sir Nigel and Ted Coy (a Yale All-American fullback)". But Fitzgerald then developed a violent antipathy to this character - specifically to the New Haven specimen, Witness, his unflattering portraits of Yale athletes Tom Buchanan in *Gatsby* and Dink Diver in *Tender is the Night*. (Though Messenger ingeniously ferrets out covert allusions in Fitzgerald's characters' names, he seems to

overlook a rather significant similarity between "Dick Diver" and the cardboard super-hero "Dink Stover". In any case, it is in Fitzgerald's fiction that we first encounter the image of the young athletic star who is a failure in later life. (Buchanan is "forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game.")

Hemingway's Robert Cohn and Faulkner's Labov in *The Hamlet* are two further examples of how the School Sports Hero becomes a "satiric emblem". But these two novelists are the principal creators of Messenger's third type of American sportsman, the "Ritual Sports Hero", a solitary, Adamic figure who seeks self-knowledge in the wilderness, striving only for himself, his own pride or revelation, renouncing public pressures and public rewards.

No one in Hemingway and Faulkner hunts marlins or bears, or buys (and chases) horses in any quest for records or quantified achievement but, rather, they encounter the "biggest" animal or fish or the most seductive pony. Furthermore, they experience the quality of the pursuit, which cannot be measured in terms of a score or a victory. In narrative after narrative, Hemingway and Faulkner belied the statistical truths of modern sport and its streamlined face by playing the real and the sacred.

(Though Messenger occasionally overschematizes his analyses, eg. trying to make Faulkner's fiction neatly correspond to Roger Caillois's quadripartite theory of play, on the whole the argument of his book stands and he convincingly demonstrates that the different sports figures evolved organically from changing realities in American sport and society. For there are many qualities of the so-called Hemingway hero in the frontiersmen of James Fenimore Cooper and their "isolated, individual experience." And the natural morality of Cooper's Deerslayer finds echoes in the pithy maxims of Frank Merriwell (Messenger might have noted the intriguing coincidence that the author of *The Leather-Stocking Tales*, whom one tends to imagine as a roughneck frontiersman like his heroes, was no less a Yale man than the author of *Dink Stover*.)

This "athletic Darwinism" is further substantiated by Harry Levin's observation that Hemingway's "ultimate protagonist is Jesus in 'Today is Friday', whose crucifixion is treated like an athletic feat, and whose capacity for taking punishment raises his fellow-feeling in the Roman soldiers." Indeed, if it is not muscular Christianity *per se*, sport is nonetheless America's religion. Small wonder that God is often referred to by Faulkner as the "ancient immortal Umpire".

## Running for a fall

Erich Segal

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## Cure or kill

Frank Zimring

ARNOLD S. TREBACH

*The Heroin Solution*  
331pp. Yale University Press. £16.95.  
0 300 02773

JOHN KAPLAN

*The Hardest Drug*  
264pp. University of Chicago Press.  
£16.  
226 42427 8

Injectable heroin is one of the worst inventions of modern times. It has engendered a serious social problem throughout the Western world; but in the United States, heroin usage is both a different and a more difficult problem. The difference is not merely one of scale, although our hundreds of thousands of heroin users are part of the distinctively American disease: urban racial ghettos, epidemic rates of

heroin usage within them, and a culture of violence interact to create special problems.

In the United States, high death rates from overdoses, active criminal users, enormous illicit profits, and large numbers of non-productive citizens are the primary legacy of injectable heroin. Our prohibition of heroin constrains its use, but at great cost: it diverts resources away from other problems of law enforcement, and leads to police corruption, to an expensive and wasteful use of imprisonment, to a large and dangerous underground economy and to the suffering of addicts. Heroin in the United States, indeed, is a fearful and important threat, and recently, the Congress passed legislation (voted by the President) to create a cabinet level "czar" to coordinate the nation's anti-drug crusade.

*The Heroin Solution* and *The Hardest Drug* are two good books on legal policy towards heroin. Their authors reach conclusions that are

almost diametrically opposed, but share a great deal of common ground en route. *The Heroin Solution*, organized more or less chronologically, alternates chapters on the haphazard history of heroin control in England and in the United States. Arnold S. Trebach's "solution" for the treatment of addiction is to allow physicians freedom to treat heroin addicts without legal prohibition. Less clear is his preferred solution for the up to 90 per cent of heroin users who might not be classified as addicts. But the most memorable single element of Trebach's approach is the advocacy of freely available injectable heroin for treatment of addicts at the discretion of doctors.

John Kaplan, in contrast, views free availability of heroin in the United States as the realization of a bad dream. While he is no friend of the prohibition of victimless crimes, his survey of the costs and benefits of heroin prohibition in the United States moves him to support a role for the

criminal law that is unseemly, substantially ineffective, but still, in his view, the lesser of evils. The more optimistic Trebach wishes to delegate to the medical profession problems that the criminal law has not solved. Kaplan views the trade-off between lesser criminal law enforcement and greater numbers of users in a different light; the availability of heroin would make those who are already addicted more comfortable but would increase the number of users as well as the extent of addiction.

One would expect the scientific evidence on heroin to be treated very differently in these books but this is not the case. Trebach does not misrepresent the evidence on heroin as a pain reliever, nor does he create a fantasy world of heroin maintenance despite the fact that this is a part of his preferred solution. And Kaplan, despite his conclusion in favour of criminal law enforcement, does not dispute the substantial costs and minimal benefits of using the criminal law to coerce users into the acceptance of some kind of treatment.

Indeed, both books traverse the empirical information on heroin quite skilfully. The authors are specialists in criminal justice, but they have done their homework in psychopharmacology, sociology, public health, and the related disciplines that teach us what little we know about heroin, and they both understand the transatlantic distinction, dealing with British solutions to British problems as separate from United States answers to United States problems. Trebach pays insufficient attention to the scale of the heroin problem in major US cities, and, remarkably, he does not address the issue of who should pay for his solution, or why heroin addicts are more entitled to the treatment he recommends than, say,

the poor, alcoholics, or any other groups dependent on public resources.

Kaplan, in contrast, provides an exhaustively argued survey of policy options on heroin in the United States. His narrow focus, together with his warnings against transplanting policies which work in one environment to another where they may not, make it difficult to know whether and to what extent he would disagree with Trebach's proposals for British policy. But in the United States, more particularly in its big cities, criminal sanctions would remain the main deterrent for heroin users convicted of other crimes, and against heroin sales. Criminal law processes would be used to coerce addicts into a variety of treatment programmes that would not include heroin maintenance. Users who had not committed other crimes would no longer be a priority of the law.

All of this fine-tuning serves modest ambitions: "Although there is hope that the cumulative effect of many small improvements may eventually lower greatly the cost of heroin in our society, it looks very much as if no dramatic change will rescue us from the problem." Kaplan's rejection of heroin maintenance is anything but ideological. Ironically, it is the scale of the heroin problem in the cities that makes broad maintenance programmes an unlikely solution: "Heroin maintenance is, in many ways, like euthanasia. It is perhaps a good idea if all the details can be worked out." Kaplan then proceeds to demonstrate that they cannot.

Both these books make accessible to a general public facts, options, and arguments about heroin policy at a far more sophisticated level than had previously been achieved. Both will be recognized as substantial contributions to the literature. They deserve a wide readership.

## Care and punishment

Tom Campbell

STEWART ASQUITH

*Children and Justice: Decision-Making in Children's Hearings and Juvenile Courts*

258pp. Edinburgh University Press.  
£18.50 (paperback, £9.75).  
0 85224 429 0

Offending children elicit diverse and often inconsistent reactions from adult officialdom, ranging from the paternalistic to the starkly punitive. Until quite recently, the "progressive" approach was to take children out of the criminal justice system and regard their "offences" as a form of malady requiring diagnosis in terms of the personal and social causes of the behaviour in question, and disposal according to the needs of the individual child. This philosophy received remarkable instantation in the Scottish "Children's Hearing" system set up by the Social Work (Scotland) Act (1968), following the Kilbrandon Report which proposed that specialized lay tribunals be established to deal with children who are considered to be "in need of

compulsory measures of care". In this system, juvenile "offenders" are seen simply as one category of children who might require social work intervention. No question of punishment can be raised and in each disposal the needs of the child are meant to be paramount. If the child accepts the "grounds of referral" the hearing, after considering various social work and other reports, may decide on discharge, supervision at home or residential supervision. Fines are not an option but a period in a List D School may still be a sharp but not usually a short shock.

Some years on, this Scottish system and its counterparts abroad have been confronted by a resurgence of a more traditional "justice" approach to the young offender, according to which children are to be regarded as at least partly responsible for their actions and are to be accorded the same rule-of-law protections as their elders. Court hearings, legal representation and determinate sentences in proportion to the actual offences are the objective of the "justice for children" movement. This retributivist resurgence is not so much a call for punishment as a demand that compulsory intervention in the lives of offending children and their families be subject to the strictest scrutiny and be limited by the degree of gravity of the offence proved in a court of law. This court-based approach is more characteristic of the English system of juvenile justice, in which lay magistrates (whose normal work is with adult offenders) in juvenile courts make determinations of guilt and innocence and are able to take account of both punitive and welfare objectives in their disposals.

Given the, at least partial, embodiment of the judicial and welfare approaches in the English and Scottish systems of juvenile justice, Stewart Asquith's comparative study of decision-making in English juvenile courts and Scottish Children's Hearings is of great topicality and interest. The core of the book is the presentation of his findings based on the use of the decision-makers' responses to typical case-studies, their formulations of reports on actual cases and the researcher's observations of the form and content of the interaction in the courts and hearings. Asquith's admittedly unsurprising conclusion is that

but are carrying out its intention that there be extensive discussion of each case involving social workers, family and children, of a sort which is not a feature of English juvenile courts.

Asquith's study involved him in making a systematic analysis of the different "frames of relevance" or "available ideologies" which might be espoused by magistrates and panel members; this includes a survey of different deterministic theories of delinquency (which could serve as a helpful overview of the area for students, as could the historical introduction to the existing systems in which he traces the repeated efforts to reconcile "justice" and "welfare"). It is not clear, however, that such an elaborate scheme is altogether necessary for research into the assumptions of lay decision-makers, whose responses to the actual and hypothetical cases set before them may well lack the sophistication presupposed by such typologies. Thus it seems doubtful whether the decision-makers genuinely espouse the determinism to which Asquith devotes considerable attention when they select a particular feature of a child's situation as relevant to their decision.

Moreover, without disputing the interest of the book's conclusions, the significance of comparisons between two such very different systems is problematic. If magistrates, but not panel members, must make findings on fact and law and consider imposing fines (by far their most popular disposal) it seems inevitable and perhaps unilluminating to discover that they are less welfare oriented than their alleged counterparts in Scotland. Further, it cannot be assumed that the type of cases processed by the two systems are comparable, since some Scottish children over the age of eight are still prosecuted in the ordinary courts. Another complicating factor, which is scarcely mentioned in this study, is the role of the "Reporters" to whom referrals are made initially and who have extensive discretionary powers as to how to proceed in their determination as to whether a child should be brought to a hearing. The Reporter is clearly a key figure in the Scottish system who has no counterpart south of the border.

Dr Asquith does not argue the merits of the competing and confused ideologies of juvenile justice and is understandably careful not to criticize magistrates or panel members for their attempts to sort out the intricate theoretical and grave practical problems with which society has asked them to deal. However, he does allow himself a vigorous parting shot in which he points out that both English and Scottish systems may be seen as institutionalizing an individualistic approach to the offending child which is at variance with the social causes of individual behaviour. Genuine justice for children may be more a matter of social reform than of personal attention.

## Down in evidence

Tony Parker

RUPERT ALLASON

*The Branch: A History of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch 1883-1983*  
180pp. Seeker and Warburg. £8.95.  
0 436 01165 4

A strange and disconcerting book, with former Commander of the Special Branch Leonard Burt writing in his foreword: "I hope it will help to dispel some of the myths surrounding the Branch". Whatever these myths are it is highly unlikely the book will do any such thing, and it would be naive to suppose it was ever intended to. I have a note on the jacket about its author, the publishers tell us he is thirty-one years old and lives in London with his wife and son; the field is narrowed still further with the additional information that he was a Special Constable for six years, "has written several military history books under a pseudonym, and is currently working on a film project". Presumably we're meant to infer that the name used here is his real one, though it doesn't actually say so. About the possibility of genuine revelations the author himself is less reticent. "No history of the Branch would be complete", he tells us in his introduction, "unless access has been given to its Registry." He then continues blandly, "Naturally such a request is never likely to be granted". Not many historians are quite so straightforward about the paucity and unreliability of their source-material.

*The Branch* may have a purpose deeper than its apparent determination to provide a totally superficial and banal account of a grey area of political police work. But it is difficult at first to grasp what the deeper purpose might be, given the book's jargon, the relentless use of its clichés and its obsessions. We are told, for instance, that pacifist organizations in 1914 "were fronts for revolutionary groups; some tried to disrupt the munitions industry, while others attempted to foment dissent". And

that in 1939 a raid on a house where IRA suspects lived "led to the recovery of a quantity of bomb-making equipment".

Numerous other completely uninformative statements appear: unexpectedly, without preamble or comment or subsequent elaboration. One paragraph begins, with no prior mention of the subject, "Of the sixteen enemy agents executed in England between 1939 and 1945 only one, Josef Jacobs, was shot in the Tower of London after a court-martial." There is no information about who the other fifteen were, how they were executed or where, nor even if they were tried. The sentence which follows is: "In contrast to the Great War, the Security Services established a system to co-ordinate MI5's activities with local Chief Constables, so there was little need to call upon the Branch to deal with the two hundred or so provincial forces." Heavy-handed censorship seems the only possible explanation of countless similarly elliptical remarks which make several chapters barely comprehensible. False hares are raised and promptly buried, and in more than one sense red herrings are regularly drawn out. Cockburn would have been surprised to learn that "the Communist Party of Great Britain's chief organs were *The Daily Worker* and *The Week*".

A disturbing thought grows: perhaps this is not an official history of the Special Branch at all. Could it not be a profoundly subversive work, ostensibly trying to conceal, but deliberately doing so so unskillfully that it actually draws attention to matters which others will be prompted to investigate? Is the author in fact a Special Branch "Deep Throat", giving out a stream of hints and nudges and whistles? Or, is such a thought also just the paranoia inevitably brought on by reading such a book? But there is a plain warning at the end to supporters of CND: "The Branch is under an obligation to report on developments and identify supporters with sinister motives", though of course no definition of "sinister" is provided.

## CINEMA

## Progressive's progress

Arthur Marwick

ANTHONY W. HODGKINSON and RODNEY E. SHERATSKY

*Humphrey Jennings: More than a Maker of Films*  
250pp. University Press of New England. £15.  
0 87451 226 3

The publishers of this beautifully produced book eschew the hard sell: "Many agree that Jennings (1907-1950) is Britain's most remarkable and universal documentary film maker." The tone is appropriate. Jennings, who met an early death when, location-seeking in Greece, he fell from a cliff, still inspires a quiet reverence not accorded even to John Grierson, "father of British documentary", nor to Paul Rotha or Harry Watt. Jennings was a poet, a painter, and a founder-member of Mass Observation; this is the significance of the subtitle, an adaptation of David Gascoyne's remark of 1978 that Jennings was "more than just a maker of films" (my italics). None the less films are the thing: in a valuable appendix the authors supply summaries and credits for the whole of Jennings's output, whereas amid a rich collection of film stills they reproduce only one of his paintings.

From 1934 onwards Jennings was making films mainly, but not exclusively, for the GPO Film Unit; he was credited with "Colour Direction and Production" in Len Lye's Shell film of 1936, "The Birth of the Robot", an early and fetching version of the notion that you can be sure of Shell. The pre-war film showing most distinctively the characteristics which came to be associated with Jennings, and which are summarized by Anthony W. Hodgkinson and Rodney E. Sheratsky, is "The Council of Sound-Track Allusions and Images that may be only remotely related to each other" was *Spare Time* (1939). However, even this eighteen-minute documentary may not establish

Jennings as an *auteur* since there are grounds for attributing much that is innovative about the film to its editor, Stewart McAllister.

Jennings is reported to have once said that "good films could only be made in times of disaster". Certainly, while that doubtful, but revealing, assertion is best relegated to be a question in an exam-paper, the war did offer progressive intellectuals an opportunity and audience they would not otherwise readily have attained. For the Ministry of Information and for posterity there came from Jennings: *The First Days* (co-directed with Harry Watt and Pat Jackson), *Spring Offensive, Welfare of the Workers* (co-directed with Pat Jackson), *London Can Take It* (co-directed with Harry Watt), *Heart of Britain, Words of Battle, Listen to Britain, Fires Were Started, The Silent Village, V-I, The Eighty Days, The True Story of Lilli Marlene*, and *A Diary for Timothy*. *London Can Take It* was intended for American audiences, to whom it was shown as a straightforward report by the American journalist Quentin Reynolds, all other credits being suppressed; a shortened version entitled *Britain Can Take It* was used in British cinemas. Though the Ministry of Information was struck by its usual doubts, the film was manifestly successful propaganda. Reynolds' sententious rasp still echoes in the head: "These are not Hollywood sound effects... this is the music they play every night at London... the symphony of war...". There is argument over Jennings's precise contributions to the film, but the final shot showing a jaunty young air-raid warden getting a light for his cigarette from a cab-driver has been recognized by Harry Watt as "one of Humphrey Jennings's touches of genius". *Words of Battle* comprises readings from William Camden, Milton, Blake, Browning, Keats, Churchill and Abraham Lincoln. To the authors of this book "the accompanying images half is taken up with photographs, appendices and bibliographies. In their shrewd and undogmatic way, they have got it about right.

accompanied by visual images diminishes both the poetry and the visuals. The justly celebrated *Listen to Britain* has no commentary, and the use of natural sound, together with a range of musical sources, often anticipating the images, never stales, though the techniques have long since entered the realm of film cliché.

Jennings belonged to that highly privileged group which some term upper-middle-class, others "upper-class". When his private means proved insufficient to support a family as well as his painting, he turned to his Cambridge contacts and it was through them that he entered the charmed circle of film-making. Actually, most of the products of the British documentary movement are pretentious, patronizing and tiresome; only now are the solid merits of British feature films of the 1930s, 40s and 50s coming to be recognized. Jennings's most distinctive war-time films have a special gentleness, but inevitably he shared in the progressive intellectuals' perception of the war and its significance. Both *A Diary for Timothy* at the end of the war ("Are you going to make the world a different place - you and all the other babies?") and *Dim Little Island*, four years later, hold to the notion that the war had unleashed a great potential for social reform.

It would be as absurd, however, to blame Humphrey Jennings for helping to engender the complacency which may be seen as one of the less fortunate legacies of the war, as it would be to blame Wilfred Owen for creating disenchantment with World War One, and thus the mood of appeasement which eventually followed. Jennings's films are genuinely a part of the complex war experience and through them we can still enter into that experience. But we must never mistake them for the whole experience. Hodgkinson and Sheratsky have written a short book, of which about half is taken up with photographs, appendices and bibliographies. In their shrewd and undogmatic way, they have got it about right.

## Austerely spellbinding

Richard Combs

PETER COWIE

*Ingmar Bergman: A Critical Biography*  
397pp. Seeker and Warburg. £12.50.  
0 436 10885 2

Bergman has long been held up as the epitome of "personal" cinema, a director who has drawn on his own experiences and upbringing for his moral, religious, psychological and metaphysical themes. But he is also a very private individual and his life has not been an open book in the manner of a similarly autobiographical filmmaker like Fellini. (He has even expressed a longing to be as anonymous as the craftsman who built Chartres Cathedral.) Peter Cowie, who has a long personal acquaintance with Bergman, admits that "there is the sense of exasperation at being unable, by virtue either of fastidiousness or of a certain fear of the laws of libel, to pry too keenly into the intimate ways of the subject". In this "critical biography" he only fills in personal background which is relevant to the films, but his portrait of a director with a tendency to the dictatorial is not always flattering. He does give us, however, a valuable detailed family history, which both qualifies and elaborates on the legend of Bergman's strict Lutheran upbringing, and the account of his attachment to Pia, a sparsely inhabited island in the Baltic where Bergman first worked in 1960, made his home and principal location from the mid-1960s, and which he has documented for its own sake in two films shot ten years apart.

What comes across in these instances is the austerity and bleakness, spiritual and physical, which is probably everyone's image of Bergman's cinema. But what is also revealed is an intensity, and waywardness, of emotional life that led Bergman to reject his repressive background (he actually physically assaulted his father, a pastor) and to maintain ever since a fierce ambivalence about home and family life, but which has not prevented him from sustaining a working discipline as regular as the seasons, with a prodigious output in both the cinema and theatre. Another interesting side to his character is also revealed: his early and deep attachment to music and his dislike of reading. He still tends to talk of his films in musical analogies and to protest that he is not at all an intellectual but an instinctual director.

The real curiosity of this approach, however, is that while the biographical aspect is constantly advancing towards criticism as such, the criticism itself never really gets going. For all its fastidiousness, the book does convey the turmoil of Bergman's life (the many marriages and longstanding affairs with three of his leading actresses; the bungling assault by Swedish tax authorities in 1976 which drove him temporarily into German exile), the sense of a compulsive, driven personality, busily evolving. But the account of the films is more static, despite Cowie's attempts, for instance, to trace the development of Bergman's religious theme, from problems of faith in the 1950s to existential doubts about God in the 1960s. The major problem is that Cowie implicitly accepts the standard view of Bergman as someone who has taken the great questions of life on his shoulders, and the discussion of the films consequently has a hermeneutic quality, as if they were perfectly transparent means of expression for this self-sufficient questioning intelligence.

This impression is reinforced even by the chapter devoted to Bergman's "cultural heritage". Cowie begins by quoting Bergman: "I'm a radar set. I pick up one thing or another and reflect it back in mirrored form, all jumbled

up with memories, dreams and ideas." Many people are, quite reasonably, compared with Bergman: other Swedish directors (Victor Sjöström, Mauritz Stiller), playwrights (Strindberg, Par Lagerkvist, Hjalmar Bergman), philosophers and mystics (Swedenborg, C. J. L. Almqvist). But Cowie in his summation returns to Bergman the solitary genius: "So the names are summoned forth, as in some ritual incantation. But they remain mere embellishments to Bergman's art."

Discussion of Bergman's style or technique is also swept up in assumptions about the overriding humanist significance of his work. This can allow a contradiction to pass unexamined: the observation that his films of the early 1940s were much indebted to Expressionism while Bergman himself cites Rossellini as an influence: "all that extreme simplicity and poverty, that greyness". It also means that other possible affinities in his work, the connections that might break down the cliché of Swedish isolation in general and Bergman's artistic inviolability in particular, are not analysed in detail. Mention is made of his admiration for Hitchcock, for the unlikely reason of his assurance as an entertainer and his ability to spellbind an audience. Comparison here might have been worth pushing further (both directors had religious upbringings). Other "foreign" influences would also have been worth elucidating - apart from Strindberg, Bergman has also played Pitye, Terrence Williams and Edward Albee. Perhaps in the end too much of the biographical has frustrated the critical. Cowie has given us a generous portrait of the artistic personality but has not answered many of the questions about his art.

Portage, INLAND 154p. ARBOOD, 17p

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# The new-found lands American book-collecting journals

David McKitterick

JOHN ALDEN and DENNIS C. LANDIS (Editors)

*European Americana*: a chronological guide to works printed in Europe relating to the Americas, Volume II: 1601-1650. 954pp. New York: Readex. \$85. 0 918414 09 1.

The first volume of *European Americana* appeared two years ago, and the project will eventually end with the Revolution: if this date seems curiously arbitrary for a series devoted to the Americas as a whole, however great the impact of the Declaration of Independence on the old colonial powers, there are sound practical reasons for it – not least to keep some possibility of completion for a nobly conceived study. This second volume, covering a mere half-century where the first covered more than twice as much, is devoted to a period almost defined by the establishment of plantations for tobacco in Virginia and sugar in Barbados, and preoccupied in some circles with the spread of syphilis, a disease already widely recorded in the sixteenth century but all the more significant in that it needed to be absorbed into the classic European medical tradition. France founded settlements at Port Royal (in modern Nova Scotia) in 1605 and at Quebec in 1608, and attempts were made by the Dutch and English to break the Spanish monopoly in South America, while American news gradually began to seep into the European intelligence system. Thanks to migrations, the European population of the western hemisphere expanded enormously, to the detriment of the native population, and transportation, slavery and cramped labour became familiar features of colonization. The simultaneous processes of assimilation of new and strange cultures and countries, as well as their products, and of exploitation as a widely accepted vehicle of financial speculation, dominated the period.

When in 1713 White Kennet published his first list of Americana, he did so in order to provide an aid to those engaged in missionary work. Our definition of the term has changed since according to the preoccupations of succeeding generations, and as used here it goes far beyond familiar standbys such as Sabin or Medina's *Bibliotheca Hispano-Americana*. The compilers of *European Americana*

estimate that, as a result of redefining their scope, less than one-third of the 7,400 items in this volume appear in Sabin; but conversely, they have rejected most Spanish (or, for that matter, English and French) theology that might have received notice hitherto simply for calling attention to the presence of the European powers in the New World. Our notions of what the term can be persuaded to comprehend have changed in a most suggestive manner since Henry Stevens, the greatest of the many booksellers who have dealt in the subject, responded to expressions of American nationalism and battled to persuade collectors to buy not only English books on their country, but those in foreign languages as well.

The geographical area has expanded, to encompass all the Americas, but the focus has shifted also, to include the impact of the New World as an idea as well as a geographical location and economic base: its absorption within the European intellectual, as well as material, frame of reference. Donne's "O my America my new-found land" characteristically seized a geographical allusion, but also played with the excitement of modern discovery in an apparently quite alien context; the western hemisphere offered a fashionable mode of thought beyond economic, social, political or religious constraints. Ben Jonson (of course), Bacon, Taylor the Water Poet and Shakespeare, with dozens of other imaginative writers, found cause to allude to it, sometimes in a contrived manner, as it was digested into the European consciousness. It is not the least important aspect of the approach taken by *European Americana* that it chronicles and describes this interplay between the Americas as a world for mental speculation and as a continent demanding exploration, trade and emigration, while at the same time working fundamental changes in Europe. Future volumes will suggest other topics, but in these respects the period covered by this one is crucial. In 1973 Thomas R. Adams, librarian of the John Carter Brown Library (the institution responsible for the series), wrote of the library as "a challenge to explore the meaning of the discovery of America, an event whose full implications are not yet understood". He was modest in his understatement, but this volume gives the voyage the best possible encouragement.

As is noted by John Alden and Dennis C. Landis, their work is not complete; but it is far more so than anything else of its kind available. Its most serious limitations – as are obviously, not so much from accidental omissions in the compilers' reading, or from decisions on what to select, as from the nature of the printed document itself. The compilers rightly draw attention to the administrative revolution that made Spanish government dependent on printed communication even at a trivial level, and they have done their best to prune in this area. But the English State Papers, being overwhelmingly manuscript are usually not eligible at all; and while space is found for a single column of tripos verses strung together for presentation in the schools at Cambridge in 1608, no account can be taken of the manuscript circulation of English poetry antedating printed collections. The commonplace that printing can be inhibiting as well as richly communicative is nowhere more clear than in a study such as this, which seeks to chronicle, through the impact of a single medium, the impact of America or Europe. But therein is another book. *European Americana*, chronologically arranged, with full and ingenious bibliographical references to standard authorities, locations of extant copies, a geographical index of printers and booksellers as well as an alphabetical one, and a general index of authors, titles and subjects, deserves the widest possible use.

Colleagues commemorate a long curatorship of the Houghton Library, Harvard, in fifteen *Essays in Honor of James Edward Wilson on his sixty-fifth birthday* (Goethe Institute, Boston: Houghton Library, \$50). Available in the UK from Howes Bookshop in Hastings, East Sussex. They range over Victorian and Portuguese printing, the history of libraries, learned librarianship and US dramatic typography.

Katherine Kyes Leab and Daniel J. Leab

The best-known and most widely distributed (over 8,000 circulation) of the periodicals read by America's book collectors is really a trade journal, *AB Bookman's Weekly*. *AB* began as a section devoted to the exchange of antiquarian books, of the R. R. Bowker Company's *Publishers Weekly*; it developed into a separate publication and achieved independence on July 1, 1953, when Bowker sold it to its editor, Sol Malkin, who with his wife ran it with great style and success for almost twenty years. In the early 1970s Jacob L. Chernofsky became editor and publisher, and in the past decade he has made dramatic increases in circulation and advertising revenues, partly through the use of "theme issues" whose editorial features are devoted to such subject areas as medical books, children's books, or the literature of crime. About three-quarters of each weekly issue lists thousands of books wanted and for sale by hundreds of dealers – and some private individuals (books for sale only: the "wants" section is restricted to the trade). The editorial features include news of the book world, library and business notes, obituaries, articles about collecting and collectors, speeches given at scholarly meetings, literary and historical essays, and reports. In the past few years the book reviews and the reports of book fairs and auction sales have been relentlessly cheerful, the only black marks being bestowed upon the American postal authorities. Though some editorial rethinking has been going on, *AB* is still a highly democratic journal. Typically, in a recent issue a complex, scholarly overview of Dashiell Hammett's career and literary style was followed by a bookseller's rambling reminiscence. *AB*, as any reader of the TLS back page will know, is seeking to win British subscribers by offering cheap air-freight delivery. Subscriptions include the two-part *AB Bookman's Yearbook*, whose strengths and weaknesses reflect those of the weekly.

For much of this century there has been published in the United States an *American Book Collector*. The current holder of this title has its origins in the endeavours of Dennis Carboneau, who in the mid-1970s began *Bibliogloss*, an interesting if somewhat eccentric little magazine that became *Book Collector's Market*. By the end of the decade William Burton, in the form of the Moretus Press, had assumed publication of that magazine and had in turn transformed it into the *American Book Collector* (*ABC*). Burton has a long-standing interest in antiquarian books and the trade, and some years ago the Moretus Press published an excellent directory of American booksellers and their specialities. He has been aided in producing *ABC* by the consulting Editor, Anthony Fair. Some 3,000 copies of this attractively designed journal are sent to subscribers or sold every two months, the majority going to subscribers; *ABC* is unique among American book-collecting journals, however, in that it

has achieved news-stand distribution. *ABC* is an interesting if uneven blend of articles, news notes and reviews of books, catalogues and the like. Among the consistently valuable features are those by Anne Horton, its contributing editor on photographic. Among the most useful *ABC* features are the bibliographical check-lists – recent subjects being Truman Capote and Edward Albee – which offer "bibliographical information sufficient for accurate identification of the first edition of every title listed". The editorial tone of *ABC* is sharp, witty and sometimes hypercritical.

Terry Belanger's *Bibliography Newsletter* is also pungent and engaging; Belanger, in addition to directing the rare books programme of the Columbia University School of Library Service, organizes summer institutes on rare books, plans conservation programmes and runs the Book Arts Press. *BN*, as it is known, has been a part and a reflection of Belanger's activities since its founding in 1973, and has grown proportionately, both in pages and in circulation (now about 1,000). *BN* is a colourful amalgam of trenchant reports of meetings and lectures, propaganda for various projects, informative lists of new and remaindered books and other items of bibliographical interest, and gadfly stings. Over the years, however, *BN*'s frequency of publication has diminished even as its importance has grown; at one point *BN*, which had started as a monthly, was not even a quarterly. Daniel Traister, Assistant Curator of Special Collections at the University of Pennsylvania, has now joined Belanger in putting out the newsletter.

The quarterly *Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* is produced by John Lancaster, Special Collections Librarian at Amherst College, and his wife, Ruth Mortimer. Rare Books Librarian at Smith College. *PBSA* is the successor to the well-regarded *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* and includes such thorough articles as Anne Charters' "Kerouac's Literary Method and Experiment: The Evidence of the Manuscript Notebooks in the Berg Collection". *Fine Print*, whose editor-publisher is Sandra Kirschenbaum, is a "review of the arts of the book", as its subtitle states. Its occasional preciousness seems a small price to pay for its interesting articles and reviews and its pull-out calendar of events. The *Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin* is "designed to present information on... materials in the Texas at Austin", and it's as thick as a Texas steak. A recent 180-page issue dealt with Photography at the Humanities Research Center. The quarterly *Manuscripts* began in 1948 as *The Autograph Collectors Journal*, the organ of the Society of Autograph Collectors. Now edited for the Manuscript Society by David R. Chestnut, a historian at the University of South Carolina, it includes such special features as a report on auction trends and a section called "Collectors Showcase" which highlights various collections of autographs or manuscripts in a vivid and intelligent

fashion. Robert Hennon's *Microbibliophile* is dedicated to "the miniature book movement", and its issue includes photographs, auction trends and commentary. The *Quarterly News Letter of the Book Club of California* is a membership benefit, its extra copies are for sale when available. Typical of its articles is an England's "The Early Printing Career of Edward De Witt Taylor, 1898-1898". *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* is "devoted to research in the field of Jewish bibliography", and its most recent issue includes a checklist of works about Heinrich Graetz, a noted chronicler of Jewish history.

The periodicals produced by various libraries for their friends and supporters may contain articles useful to collectors as well as information on their own collections. One can read Ashley Montagu on the Nonesuch Press in Princeton's *Library Chronicle* or the literary agent Don Congdon on the papers of his former colleague, Harold Matson, in *Columbia Library Columns*. Or there is "John Wesley in Middletown" in the Wesleyan University *Library Notes* and the revealing transcript of a talk given by the head of Christie's New York book department in the Detroit Public Library's *Among Friends*.

This is but a small sampling of the periodical literature of American book-collecting. A wider survey is obtainable in G. Thomas Tanselle's "The Periodical Literature of English and American Bibliography", which appeared in the 1973 volume *Studies in Bibliography*, edited by Fredson Bowers, and was supplemented in Tanselle's "The Literature of Book Collecting" in *Book Collecting: A Modern Guide* (New York and London: Bowker, 1977).

*AB Bookman's Weekly* (PO Box AB, Clifton, New Jersey 07015). *American Book Collector* (214 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016). *Bibliography Newsletter* (21 Claremont Avenue, New York, New York 10027).

*Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* (PO Box 297, Grand Central Station, New York, New York 10163). *Printing Library* (PO Box 4922, Grand Central Station, New York, New York 10163). *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities* (Publishing Center for Cultural Resources, 625 Broadway, New York, New York 10012). *Fine Print* (PO Box 3394, San Francisco, CA 94119). *The Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin* (Humanities Research Center, PO Box 728, Austin, Texas 78712). *Manuscripts* (Manuscript Society, 59 North Niagara Street, Burbank, CA 91505).

*The Microbibliophile* (Robert E. Hennon, 824 Capri Isles Blvd, Apt 106, Venice, Florida 33595). *Quarterly News Letter of the Book Club of California* (312 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94108). *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* (Library, Hebrew Union College-JIR, 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220).



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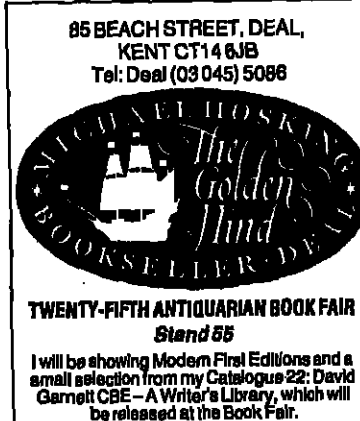
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# Getting back to nature

## William Logan

### CAROLYN FORCHÉ

*The Country Between Us*  
63pp. Cape. £3.95.  
0 224 0295 1

### SANDRA McPHERSON

*Patron Happiness*  
71pp. New York: Ecco Press. \$9.95.  
0 88001 021 5

### JON ANDERSON

*The Milky Way: Poems 1967-1982*  
115pp. New York: Ecco Press. \$14.95.  
088001 006 1

### JORIE GRAHAM

*Erosion*  
83pp. Princeton University Press.  
\$12.50 (paperback, \$6.95).  
0691 06570 5

### AMY CLAMPITT

*The Kingfisher*  
149pp. New York: Knopf. \$11.95.  
0394 52840 9

### LESLIE SCALAPINO

*Considering how exaggerated music is*  
138pp. San Francisco: North Point  
Press. \$9.50.  
086547 066 9

### DAVID W. ABIN

*Icehouse Lights*  
69pp. Yale University Press. £6.95.  
0 300 02816 4

### GJERTRUD SCHNACKENBERG

*Portraits and Elegies*  
48pp. Boston: David R. Godine.  
\$8.95.  
087923 368 0

The murky relation between private lives and public affairs darkens Carolyn Forché's *The Country Between Us*. The first sequence of poems derives from the months she spent working in El Salvador, and her eye is no less striking when it notices ordinary events ("the oldest women / shelling lima beans into black shawls") than when it records the horrifying:

A boy soldier in the bone-hot sun works his knife  
to peel the face from a dead man  
and hang it from the branch of a tree  
flowering with such faces.

Too many political poems are written with a kind of moral innocence; Forché often displays an irony - towards the pretensions of a twenty-year-old poet, for example - that sounds a more distrustful note.

Unfortunately, despite her concern with external events, her poetry still seems trapped by current expectations (poets now begin as autobiographers, and much of their verse exists only as a vehicle for reflection or confession). In her attempt to offer a personal response to the horrors she has witnessed Forché too often emphasizes herself at their expense. She is all too conscious of her role as poet ("To my country / ship poetry instead / of bread, / so I cut through nothing"), and insists on turning political events into symbols that haven't any of the power of the events themselves ("while birds and warmer weather / are forever moving north, / the cries of those who vanish / might take years to get here"). She also reveals a mystical strain which threatens to turn the blood of men into the blood of poetry. When a colonel dumps a bag of human ears on a table, for her inspection:

Something for your poetry, no? he said.  
Some of the ears on the floor caught this  
scrap of his voice. Some of the ears on the  
floor were pressed to the ground.

The story is so grotesque that she has cast it in prose; but even that cannot save so poetic an ending.

Forché's work relies on sensibility, but she has not found a language for deeper feeling. When she tries to be poignant she is only pretentious: "We have, each of us, nothing. / We will give it to each other." She has, however, brought into American poetry a subject that is often considered alien to it. Despite its faults, *The Country Between Us* is often disturbing. Forché is at her best when angry, rather than elegiac; her elegies are discursive, while anger moves her to epigram.

In three earlier books Sandra McPherson celebrated domestic themes. *Patron Happiness*, her fourth, is more intimately autobiographical; adopted at birth, she recently discovered and confronted her real mother, and a few of the new poems explore her tentative relations with this stranger. The discovery turns back on herself, however - on the woman who was born not Sandra McPherson but Helen Todd. She says to "Helen", with an honest but shocking dissociation, "I was not born. Only you were."

The painful emotions apparent in these unresolved conflicts vanish when she writes poems immersed in nature. At such times McPherson remains a gorgeous impressionist, whose inventions are a kind of rapture. It is not merely her metaphors that redeem the ordinary, though their precise gaudiness has a transforming effect: "Terms flash here, four dolled-up stiffs in a pool; / Dozens of godwits a thick golden hem on the bay." Rather, such beauty restores to her a sense of possibility and danger. Whether implicated in a near-drowning at a motel pool or in a mud cure at "The Spa of the Posthumous", nature retains its dangers even when tamed, its therapeutic effects when marketed:

The pre-Divinity majors I once knew  
Have all become gods by now.  
Their wives were always goddesses.  
But you and I were trained by needs and  
boulders.

Graduating to a part of nature.  
McPherson's irony does not, however, allow her to forget that, although encounters with the main made may be destructive, they make up the world, like that of the adopted child, in which she must live.

Jon Anderson's latest *The Milky Way* has a pleasant ambiguity, especially since his recent poems suffer from an excess of sentimentality. His early work progressed as can be seen from this collected volume, from the excruciatingly self-absorbed *Looking for Jonathan* (the title alone should warn off the reader) to *In Sepia*, which, in its economy of emotion and handling of abstract matter, is morally richer and more demanding than the work of

But if all our losses are a form of death,  
A mirror in which we see ourselves  
advance,  
I believe in its terrible, empty reflection,  
its progress from judgment toward  
compassion.

His tendency to lapse into the sentimental in the presence of good has been exacerbated in more recent poems. In "Lives of the Saints", for example, he attempts to beatify Mozart, John Clare, Tolstoy, Mandelstam, Rembrandt, Klee - as if their suffering were a martyrdom to art or to an idea. He has a point, but it seems the wrong one; the pain of artists, even in the service of their art, is not special. Like many poets, Anderson has perhaps begun to find his seriousness burdensome. He has written relatively little since *In Sepia* was published in 1974. It is valuable to have his three early books and the new poems gathered here, but they seem to chart a life which after six or so years of emotional upheaval has had most of the bad blood drained out of it.

Jorie Graham's first book, *Hybrids of Plants and of Ghosts*, was full of frenzied invention, often bewildering, luxuriantly abstract, produced by an imagination subject to such heat and pressure that it might quickly have burnt itself out. Her second book is calmer and more precise, though it lacks the energy and the wild images of her earlier poems. *Erosion* in this context could have been dangerously symbolic:

The tide  
is always pulsing upward, inland, into the  
river's rapid  
argument, pushing  
with its insistent tragic waves - the living  
echo,  
says my book, of some great storm far out at  
sea, too far

to be recalled by us  
but transferred  
whole onto this shore by waves, so that  
erosion  
is its very face.

Where once Graham's personality was sapped by verbal ingenuity, the erosion of that ingenuity has left her more concerned with the outward relations that manifest inward ones. In poem after poem her considerable intelligence forces the natural world to serve the complexities of philosophy.

The ancient walls and richly embroidered culture of Italy, where Graham was raised, offset the uncivil landscapes of New York City and rural America. What has been revealed is Graham's isolation as she casts now into nature, now into philosophy, for some human contact or echo - her titles, range from "Reading Plato" and "In What Manner the Body is United with the Soul" to "Wanting a Child". For Graham, poetry is still a mental construct; the secret subject she veers from is loneliness. Even when her forms are truncated or her arguments impromptu and unsatisfying, her best poems maintain a tension between real and ideal that drives them past the surface tensions of the intellectual life, and into deeper areas than anything encountered in her earlier work.

Amy Clampitt is the most refreshing new American poet to appear in many years; indeed, she is one of the few poets of major ambition and major talent now writing in America. After the bland prose that characterized American verse during the 1970s, there has been a sudden lurch back towards more stringent forms, led by Gjertrud Schnackenberg. Brad Leithauser, Katha Pollitt, and now Amy Clampitt.

Clampitt is also entranced by natural phenomena; but where Jorie Graham uses nature to complement mind and Sandra McPherson, emotion, Clampitt is simply engulfed by it. She has a love of description, like Wallace Stevens in "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" or Elizabeth Bishop in "Florida" that transforms the physical world and turns description into an imaginative act.

Where at low tide the rocks, like the back of an old sheepdog or spinnaker, are rugged with wet seaweed, the dove among a parenthesis of ocean, at times writhing like a snail, at others all language fades, or sun-pounded gritty alliter of mica; or hanging intact, a curtain wall just frosted indigo, so immense a hue, a blue at whose majesty a line is blocked, at whose majesty a line is blocked, in daylight, a lighthouse, like a pierced like a needle's eye.

She does not so much adhere to form as strew her poems with an array of metrical and musical devices that are too little employed in recent American poetry, and have rarely been employed with such mischievous delight in the possibilities of language by anyone since Elizabeth Bishop and Marianne Moore.

Clampitt's careful descriptions foster a familiar, even conspiratorial tone. She might be a schoolteacher - the scrupulous notes at the end of the volume encourage that impression - but she takes such pleasure in her subjects that one learns as much by her example as by her examinations. Just when she begins to seem a poet of only the sweetest temperament, however, she turns and displays a darkness beyond self-knowledge, a loss that cannot be purged by language.

Clampitt can make poetry out of almost anything: water trickling down subway steps, Beethoven's Opus 111, the sea mouse, or the disadvantages of central heating. *The Kingfisher* at times seems like a vast sampler, its fifty poems still not compassing her imagination. Clampitt has mastered a range of moods and diction, from elegy to satire. She has the timing of a comedian and the poise of an actress, yet her poems remain intimate, unassuming, and often playfully detached. That easy tone can disguise hard lessons.

Would Prometheus, cursing on his rock as he considered fire, the smuggled grain inside the weed stem, and the excesses since his protracted punishment began, have cursed the ocean's copious antidote, its leaping, cold, incessant undulance plowed to shards by wheeling porpoises, hydrogen-cum-oxygen fanned up in mimics?

of hard canon, diamond of purest water, the forbidden element crossed by fire, its breakup the absorbing smile of rainbow? The metres, the long sentences, the copious and even frivolous vocabulary draw from Bishop and Moore, Wilbur and Merrill, but they challenge what they borrow, and transform what they steal. In the history of American poetry, a number of poets have come late to their first book - Frost at thirty-nine, Stevens at forty-three. Clampitt, whose poems only began to appear five years ago, is in her early fifties. There has never been anyone quite like her.

The elegant design and printing of *Considering how exaggerated music is*, Leslie Scalapino's first full collection, cannot disguise the disturbing mental states her six sequences record. Scalapino's poems seem like an inner dictation, a complicated and eccentric mental process precisely taken down. The only strain is the search for forms that such thinking will fit. Her dramatic punctuation, for example, indicates pause by the length of space following each step ("By morning, naturally, I was sated"). One might in her work speak of strong and weak commas; it is like pausing the length of Emily Dickinson's dashes.

So dramatic a form does not guarantee drama. The weird anecdotes she rattles off don't conclude, but drift away open-endedly and ominously. At times her work is a modernist grotesque - she's attracted to people who think themselves insects, or their lovers seals, dogs, plants, or baboons. One sequence, "Instead of an Animal", observes sucking and sexual urges in children. Another, "In Sequence", breathlessly recounts incidents during travels through India, Africa and America. It is never the news but the nuance that matters, and she is more alert to the shadings of social intercourse than anyone except Ashbery.

Scalapino's flaws are all the product of self-indulgence - she's garrulous, monotonous, bewilderingly paranoiac. Her onrush syntax can be confused and almost illiterate, however necessary it may seem to the passionate idiosyncrasy of her mind. It is not how she writes but what she pays attention to that makes her strange, dark poems so unusual.

Among W. H. Auden's ten choices during his term as editor of the Yale Series of Younger Poets, were John Ashbery, Adrienne Rich, W. S. Merwin, James Wright and John Hollander. No other editor in the series has equalled his precision. In recent years, under the editorship of

Hugo, the series has become conventional as cottage cheese. David Wojahn's *Icehouse Lights* is more distinguished than the selections of the last two years, but still shackled by current American fashion.

Wojahn's childhood was made for poetry - crippled mother, alcoholic father, blind grandmother and grandfather. Yet whatever pain these circumstances caused - and he returns to them with the compulsive need to relive, or restore, his childhood - has turned pulpy and bathetic in his poems: "Since memory becomes revision, / like sentiment in foolish songs, / we smooth our pasts and loss / until they're simple". To do so is to betray them.

Wojahn's is a sad, moody, earnest reflectiveness. In small towns and claustrophobic apartments, he displays his sensitivity like a scar. There is nothing risky or exciting here, nothing to offend propriety; his poems are firmly organized and his images striking, but such images, often more unsettling than the scenes they ornament, still do not redeem Wojahn's tiresome misuse of personal history, or an imagination that too easily appropriates the famous dead (Delmore Schwartz, Cesare Pavese and Buddy Holly among them).

The dead are a bullish issue on the stock exchange of American poetry. "How much can we remove from the dead / for our private, selfish use?" asks Wojahn. Not enough, one might reply, before turning to Gjertrud Schnackenberg's *Portraits and Elegies*. The first of the book's three sections is a series of poems for her dead father, the second a long poem on Darwin in old age.

Schnackenberg's fluent mastery of pentameter and rhyme serves an intelligence without muddle, an imagination that draws nature into severe alignments - a planter's clock, a rowboat on a lake, the faint moon dipping behind hills, the fish lurking in the water weeds. The nature she inhabits is not benign:

On our hot porch, a snake unbinged his jaw,  
A toad half-swallowed in his fatal kiss,  
Twin heads and double tongue that cursed our door.  
Now apples black with frost cling to the bough,  
And all around this house the cold grass  
And breathes that frog's blue sob. Oh take me now.

Her poems find, in nature, in art, anywhere, the deaths that will make her father's death bearable. The pose and confidence of these formal images rival the glassy brilliance of Hecht and Wilbur. One would not expect a poet so bound by the immediate emotions of family and marriage to be concerned with history, though her father was a historian. She usurps his occupation, however, trying to resolve in poetry the histories death leaves incomplete. Of the Bayeux Tapestry:

now the centuries of grass  
And smoke that stained it, and the bill  
And grinning worm that spiraled through  
the cloth  
Sey death alone makes life a masterpiece  
There William of Normandy remounts his horse  
A fourth time, four times desperate to drive  
Off rumors of his death. His sword is drawn.  
He swivels and lifts his visor up and sees  
Look at me well! For I am still alive!  
Your glasses, lying on the desk, look on.

The dead are bound here to a living world. Such supremely rational poetry stares down sorrow before accepting it. If Schnackenberg is the most traditional of these poets, immune to fashion and the documentary impulse, she also cuts deepest, and the clarity of her style will be the most lasting.

The *Journal of Modern Literature*, Volume 10, Number 1, edited by Maurice Beebe (1972), Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19122) includes: essay on "Mrs Dalloway and T. S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land", by Erwin Steinberg; "The Progress of Intellectual Soul: Eliot, Pausanias, and Four Quartets", by Frank Brown; and "The Manuscript of 'The Waste Land' and the Problem of

## Sale of historical books and MSS

### Sarah Bradford

Autograph manuscripts of major works by Beethoven rarely appear for sale, but on May 26 Sotheby's offered four pages of a Beethoven sketchbook containing early versions of five major works - the Piano Concerto No 1 in C major Op 15, the String Quartet in G major Op 18 no 2, the Piano Sonata in B flat major Op 22, and the Violin Sonata in A minor Op 23 and in F major Op 24. The pages, which once belonged to the violinist Bronislaw Huberman, founder of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra, and were subsequently presented by him to Toscanini, were originally part of a sketchbook of which the major fragment is in the Stadtbibliothek in West Berlin. Beethoven's sketchbooks are not easy to decipher since he often worked on different pieces alternately or at the same time, with the result that the sketches would be crammed so closely together that he would frequently have to turn back to previous blank pages to complete them, and in this case the musicologist's task was further complicated by the fact that the sketches bore only a faint resemblance to the finished works. The manuscript was sold for £27,500 to Dreemans.

Among other important musical items in the two-day sale was an autograph manuscript by Debussy, twelve folio pages of his setting of the seventh scene of Théodore de Banville's play, *Hymnis*, inscribed by the composer to Mme Vassier with whom he was in love and for whom several of his early songs were composed (£15,400 to Christopher Wood). An autograph manuscript by Schubert contained two of his early songs, composed at the age of nineteen for one of which, "Pflücht und Liebe", it is the only surviving source (£11,550 to Jopp). While an interesting series of letters by Schumann to his publisher, C. F. Peters, discussing the publication of his opera *Genoveva*, his oratorio *Die Paradies und die Peri* and his song-cycle *Dichterliebe* was bought by Otto Haas for prices ranging from £700 to £1,900. Similar prices were paid by Christopher Wood for some of the originals of Verdi's published correspondence with Conte Ottaviano Arrivabene, including a letter reporting the death of the composer's father which occurred as Verdi was rehearsing *Don Carlos* in Paris (£1,870).

Among the nineteenth and twentieth-century books sold on May 27, a signed proof-copy of Egon Schiele's *Zeichnungen*, 1917, inscribed by the artist to his wife, made £5,000 to Newton, a first edition of Dostoevsky's *Dnevnik Pisatelya* 1877 (*The Diary of a Writer* for 1877) with an inscription and a note of the inscription by Dostoevsky to the composer of the December issue of the work sold for £2,700 to Jeffrey, and a fine copy of the first edition of Tolstoy's *Yolna i Mir* (*War and Peace*) was bought by H. D. Lyon for £3,800. Interestingly it was followed by an unpublished letter in French by Turgenyev to Princess Trubetskoy, dated March 28, 1865, criticizing the novel is no uncertain terms as it first appeared in instalments entitled 1805:

Que c'est ennuyeux et froid, quelle recherche de la petite bête, quel manque absolu de sens historique, d'imagination et de poésie (chose étrange chez lui). C'est un peintre qui a voulu faire un grand tableau d'histoire - et il s'est cassé le nez...

Nor, he added, did his friend Prosper Mérimée think much of *The Coscaques*. The letter was acquired by Christopher Wood for £2,800.

The second day's sale was devoted to continental and early printed books and bindings, among which there were some outstanding items, including two Grolier bindings. Jean Grolier (c.1479-1565) combined financial acumen with a superb taste in books and fine bindings and indeed, in the words of the late Howard M. Nixon, "His posthumous fame rests on his achievements as a book collector". The Grolier family made their fortune in the financial departments of the French royal household, Jean's father Etienne having worked for Louis XII as Treasurer of the Duchy of Milan, a post which Jean inherited on his father's death. Educated by an Italian humanist in Paris, he later established close relations with leading Italian humanists who dedicated their books to him and "extolled the munificence of his patronage". Increasing his fortune by a shrewd marriage in 1520 to

Jeanne de Briçonnet, whose family controlled most of the finances of France, he was captured with Francis I at Pavia and later returned to France where he occupied various lucrative positions in the royal service until his death in 1565. Grolier may have been somewhat unscrupulous as a businessman and was more than once subject to rigorous enquiries into his financial practices but he spent his money on the best contemporary books for which he commissioned the best contemporary bindings (establishing a tradition followed by subsequent French collectors), buying not only French books but works written or edited by his Italian humanist friends, many of his books being printed by Aldus family or by the scholar-printer, Froben of Basle.

Grolier used several binders in Paris, including the celebrated Claude de Piques whom he abandoned when de Piques became absorbed in his work for Henri II. Indeed, as Sotheby's catalogue pointed out, the first Grolier binding in the sale, an Ovid, *Fastorum Libri VI*... printed in Venice by Aldus, January 1502-February 1503, had been previously erroneously attributed to de Piques.

Grolier commissioned work from four large and two small ateliers and Dr Miriam Foot of the British Library has identified the Ovid binding as the work of one of the two small binders known as the Master of Vu Sa. Only three of his bindings for Grolier are known, with one for another patron; consequently the Ovid made a high price, £24,200 to Quaritch. Another Grolier binding in red morocco by the quaintly-named Cupid's Bow Binder, once in the Liechtenstein library, made £13,200 to Chaponniere. Quaritch also acquired a rare fifteenth-century Cracow binding with an interesting text, Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, one of the most important of medieval encyclopaedias; this copy, the *editio princeps*, was printed by Zainer at Augsburg on November 19, 1472.

In the areas which are most strongly collected there is evidently a shortage of stock relative to the funds coming forward. I could have bought a copy of a first edition of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* for £30 in Guildford in 1944. At Pickering & Chatto we sold our last copy for £6,500. There has since then been an auction record of over £8,000, though I believe that that was somewhat in excess of the current market value. I wish I thought that *The Wealth of Nations* was not going to go above the £10,000 mark for an ordinary sound copy in the next few years, but I shall be very surprised if it does not. Any major library forming a collection of economics has to have a *Wealth of Nations*; only one or two come on the market each year and a high proportion of those purchased are destined to go out of private hands. The funds for the formation of major new libraries outside the United Kingdom and the United States are still growing year by year, though some of the oldest libraries have been hard hit by inflation.

Fortunately there are still many areas in which the private collector of modest means can form his collection. Even in some major scientific subjects it would still be possible to form a good collection for quite moderate sums. A collection of the major books on psychology would cost far less than a collection of the major books in economics. Yet it is said that rare books are being priced at the rate of the operation of an inviolable market force, beyond the means of those who would most enjoy

them. In political theory the collecting is scientific. Collectors want to illustrate the history of political thought, whether they agree with it or not. The great libraries of Communist countries may have been bought by the state, but they are not the product of a market force. The international character of the market, and particularly the spread of important purchasing to countries like

one of the most fascinating aspects of the rare book market is indeed its international character. London booksellers have always served the world. The main markets are the United States and Canada, Japan and Europe, but Hong Kong and Australia are important as well. The United Kingdom undoubtedly still the major, but by no means the only, source of books for London booksellers; but is unfortunately far from the largest purchaser. Even with the pound at £1.60, prices which look entirely reasonable to the American or the Japanese buyer are still uncomfortably high for British collectors.

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